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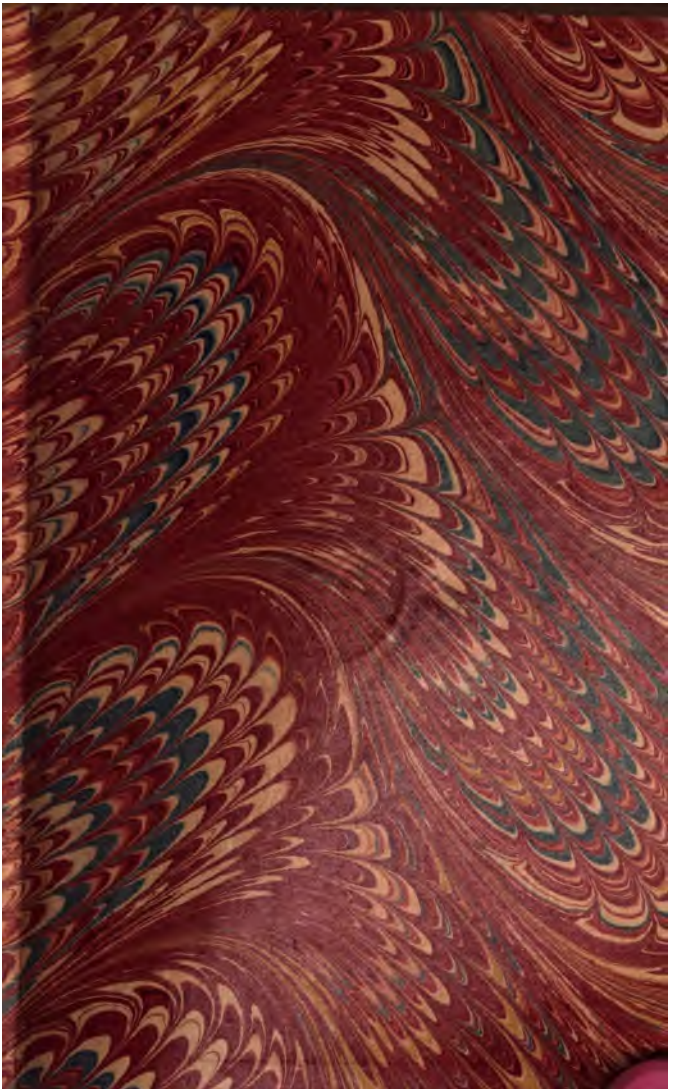
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Lectures on the Bible

To the Young :

For their Instruction and Excitement.



**" THIS BOOK OF THE LAW SHALL NOT DEPART OUT OF THY MOUTH ;
BUT THOU SHALT MEDITATE THEREIN DAY AND NIGHT, THAT THOU
MAYEST OBSERVE TO DO ACCORDING TO ALL THAT IS WRITTEN THERE-
IN ; FOR THEN THOU SHALT MAKE THY WAY PROSPEROUS, AND THEN
THOU SHALT HAVE GOOD SUCCESS."**

Lectures on the Bible

To the Young :

For their Instruction and Excitement.

BY JOHN EADIE, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE TO THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH, AND MINISTER OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN
CONGREGATION, CAMBRIDGE STREET GLASGOW.

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Preface.

THE substance of the following pages was originally composed, at the Editor's request, for the **JUVENILE MISSIONARY MAGAZINE** of the United Presbyterian Church, and appeared in successive Numbers of that useful and popular periodical, the monthly circulation of which amounts to 37,000 copies. The "Lectures"* are now published in a separate form, and have been enlarged by at least two-thirds of additional

* This title, ambitious only in appearance, may be pardoned for the sake of its convenience.

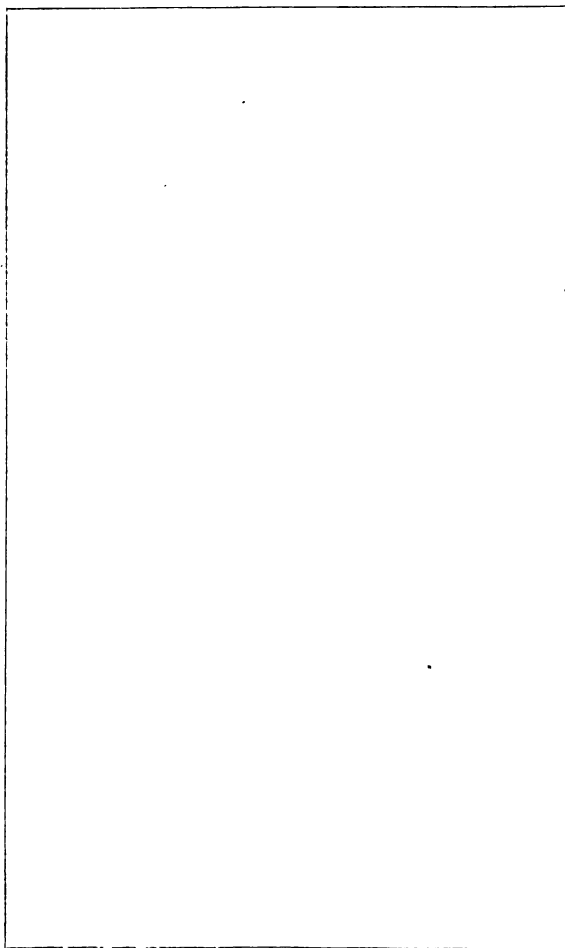
matter. Some ideas have been more fully brought out and discussed. Several illustrations have been rendered, perhaps, more striking and attractive, by a few selected proofs and examples from Biography and Biblical Literature.

Though written for the rising generation, these plain addresses are not meant for mere children. Simplicity has, indeed, been aimed at in their style and arrangement, in order to adapt them to a class of juvenile readers, whose minds have already enjoyed some previous training and discipline. They are designed to stimulate thought, as well as impart information. The object of their publication is not only to promote present improvement, but also to foster in the youthful spirit a hallowed taste for farther study in the best of all the sciences. As conducive in some measure to the same

desirable end, brief quotations of sanctified genius, from a few authors not usually familiar to the young, have been occasionally introduced.

And, in fine, it is humbly hoped, and earnestly implored, that the Divine Blessing may accompany these small contributions to the precious cause of early knowledge and piety. They are now sent abroad in the spirit of that ancient and appropriate prayer—"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

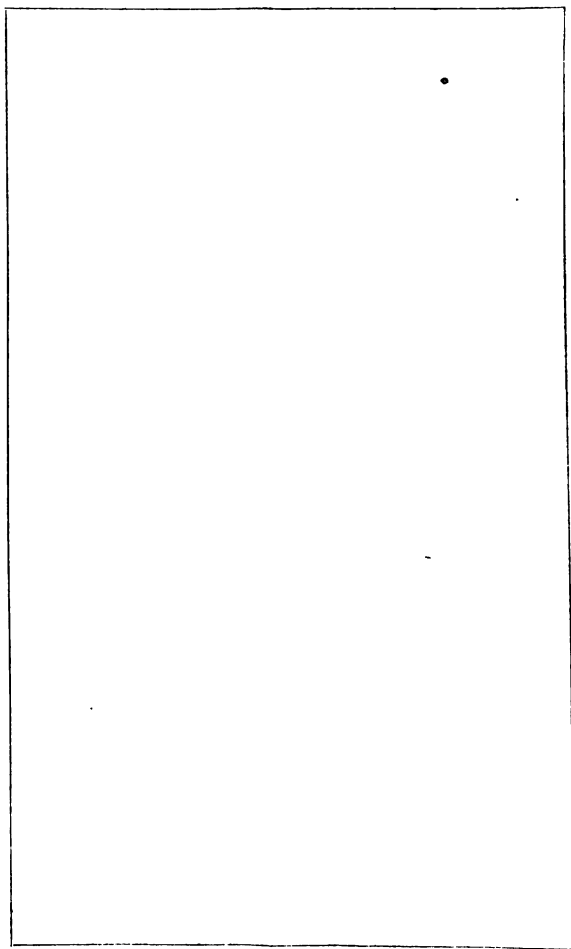
GLASGOW, MARCH 1848.



Contents.

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	Page
INTRODUCTORY,	1
READ THE BIBLE,	10
UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE,	29
BELIEVE THE BIBLE,	70
REMEMBER THE BIBLE,	99
PRACTISE THE BIBLE,	115
CIRCULATE THE BIBLE,	134





Lectures on the Bible

To the Young:

For their Instruction and Excitement.



Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Lectures on the Bible.

.....

Introductory.

.....

I PROPOSE, my young friends, in a series of brief chapters, to give you what may be termed a lecture on Biblical literature. I trust you will read, ponder, and pray over the remarks which I shall set before you. My theme is THE BIBLE—the best of books. To that book you are deeply indebted—your obligations to it can never be told. You owe to it the fervent prayers that have been breathed over you, the happy home which always welcomes you, the spiritual interest that ever guards you, and has secured to you that religious education, which not only qualifies you for “the life that now is,” but prepares you for “that which is to come.” The Bible has given a new intensity to a father’s love, and mingled a new element of

religion and hallowed by its power, all your susceptibilities guarded and blessed, and the
of your young natures neither chilled nor
but only guided and sanctified by the ex-
-tion who "increased in wisdom and sta-
-in favour with God and man." I hope
-citizens of this blessed community—
-not waiting till you become men and
-propose to enter it; but that as "boys
-are already in it, and "play" in its
-occupations, serve its King, rejoice in
-and feel a deep compassion for those of
-who, having not enjoyed a parent's in-
-been enriched with a parent's prayers,
-from the commonwealth of Israel, and
-the covenants of promise." The
-secures the blessings of this glorious
-and by its influence on your parents
-you have been enrolled among the in-
-the city of the living God."
-see has been specially consecrated for
-ence of baptism; the only authority
-dispense it, or you to receive it, is in
-: have been baptized into the name
-and Holy Ghost. **Baptized children,**

tenderness with a mother's affection. It has taught your parents to regard you as immortal beings. It has sanctified their instinctive attachment to you. It has induced them not only to train your minds, but to watch over your souls—to teach you to lisp your infant prayers, and to instruct you in the existence of God, the love of Christ, the nature of salvation, and the eternal glories of the heavenly world. That tone, too, of gentle affection in which those early lessons were communicated, and which fell upon your ear in the low murmur of sweet music, is the spirit of the Bible. "Little children," the Bible has influenced your parents "to travail in birth again, till Christ be formed in you"—to bear your names on their hearts before the Lord in earnest and effectual supplication, in order that his grace may very early touch your spirits, and introduce you to that happy Jerusalem, one of whose delightful features is, that its "streets shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." What a charming description—"boys and girls"—young persons such as you, imbued with love to Christ and reverence for his word—boys and girls in its streets, not immured in closets, with gloom in their hearts and darkness on their faces—boys and girls "*playing*" in its streets—your youthful energies

given to religion and hallowed by its power, all your juvenile susceptibilities guarded and blessed, and the buoyancy of your young natures neither chilled nor repressed, but only guided and sanctified by the example of Him who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." I hope that you are citizens of this blessed community—that you are not waiting till you become men and women ere you propose to enter it; but that as "boys and girls" you are already in it, and "play" in its streets, love its occupations, serve its King, rejoice in its privileges, and feel a deep compassion for those of your own age who, having not enjoyed a parent's instructions, nor been enriched with a parent's prayers, are yet "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise." The charter which secures the blessings of this glorious city is the Bible, and by its influence on your parents and yourselves, you have been enrolled among the inhabitants of "the city of the living God."

For an ordinance has been specially consecrated for you—the ordinance of baptism; the only authority for ministers to dispense it, or you to receive it, is in the Bible. You have been baptized into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Baptized children,

what claims have Christ and his word upon you? Will you not respond to those claims, and conduct yourselves in the spirit of them, praying that the faith which dwelt in your progenitors may be in you also, that "instead of the fathers He may take the children." Thus in your conversion and addition to His church, the old prophecy, old in its announcement, but ever new in its completion, will be fulfilled—"a seed shall serve him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation; they shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this." Whenever, then, you behold the ordinance of baptism administered, will you not hear Christ saying, "Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not?" And what peculiar fondness Jesus had for children! He caressed them. He took them in his arms and blessed them. It was his endearing character as painted in prophecy—"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." Have you not felt the joy of these wonderful truths in your own experience?

Not only, my young disciples, are you to ascribe to the Bible your name and place in the church of Christ, but perhaps you owe to it your life. An old prophet

represents a distressed sinner as exclaiming in his agony:—"Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" This question, put by an alarmed conscience, has been often answered in the affirmative, and myriads of children have been sacrificed to false divinities. Their parents have shed their blood, or made them "pass through the fire to Moloch." And in countries where infanticide prevails, thousands of thousands of babes have been cruelly put to death. The parents, in those "habitations of cruelty" have no Bible, therefore they are "without natural affection." Think, then, how many children like yourselves have been savagely murdered. Had not your parents possessed the Bible, that horrid fate might have been yours. The Bible, like its God, is "your life," and has given you "length of days."

What value then ought not you to set on this book! What gratitude ought not you to feel, if each of you has enjoyed the privilege of Timothy; and "from a child has known the Holy Scriptures!" Surely, surely the possession of such a blessing will invite you to imitate the children of old, crying in the temple, and saying "Hosanna to the Son of David"—for it is this Son of David who is the grand subject of the

Bible, in the glory of his person, the perfection of his work, the loveliness of his character, the freeness, fulness, and adaptation of his spiritual gifts.

Luther, by whose influence the Word of God was unbound, and had "free course," speaks of it often in highest praise. "Ah!" said he, on one occasion, "were I born a great poet, I would write a magnificent poem on the utility and power of the Divine Word. Without that word, what should we be? For several years I read the whole Bible twice every year. It is a great and powerful tree, each word of which is a mighty branch; each of these branches have I shaken, so desirous was I to learn what fruit every one of them bore, and what they could afford me. Each time, I succeeded in obtaining a couple of either pears or apples." At another period he says, "I was twenty years old before I had ever seen the Bible. At last I found one in the Library at Erfurt, and used to read it often with still-increasing wonder." All who have ever received the Bible, have placed upon it the highest value. They would not part with it. "The law of thy mouth is better unto me, than thousands of gold and silver." It tells you what you are to believe, and points out to you what you are to do. It describes your state, enforces your

duty, and unfolds your destiny. It speaks to you as sinners, but it reveals salvation, and shows you how it may be obtained. It dwells upon death, but it opens a path to heaven, and sheds the radiance of immortality over the gloom of the sepulchre. It gives light to your minds and impulse to your heart. It stoops to the plainest language, and soars to the noblest aims. It refreshes the weary, cheers the drooping, raises the fallen, succours the helpless, and "looses those that are appointed to death." It comes in the form of grace to the outcast, of hope to the mourner, of strength to the tempted, of patience to the tried, and of balm to the sufferer. It gives peace on earth, and secures eternal joy in heaven. It sweetens every pleasure, lightens every burden, hallows every relation, sanctifies every change, and gives a new relish to every pursuit. It keeps you from pride when you prosper, from despair when you are "cast down." When you are languid it excites you, when you are perverse it governs you, when you are attacked it shields you, and when you are apt to fall off it restores you. Its origin is God, for its essence is truth; its spirit is love, for its theme is Christ; its effect is life, for its end is glory.

I propose, then, to discourse with you on this bless-

ed book,—to tell you something of its character and composition, of its evidence and authority, of its eventful history and more wonderful results. And to give you a distinct view of the nature and order of the various topics I mean to discuss, I subjoin the following division. Each topic is announced in the form of a solemn injunction, which I trust you will relish and obey. The course of instruction comprehends the six following particulars:—

- I. Read the Bible.
- II. Understand the Bible.
- III. Believe the Bible.
- IV. Remember the Bible.
- V. Practise the Bible.
- VI. Circulate the Bible.

If you pay due attention to each of these, and pause over it in earnest prayer, as I endeavour to unfold and apply it, then I have no doubt that the Psalmist's words will be largely verified, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Lift up your little voices—"break forth into joy—sing together:—"

"Great God, with wonder and with praise
On all thy work I look;
But, still thy wisdom, power, and grace,
Shine brightest in thy book.

**“ The stars that in their courses roll,
Have much instruction given ;
But thy good word informs my soul,
How I may climb to heaven.**

**“ Then let me love my Bible more,
And take a fresh delight,
By day, to read these wonders o'er,
And meditate by night.”**



Read the Bible.

.....

MY first admonition was, READ THE BIBLE.—That all of you have been taught, and are able, to read, is a matter of supreme gratitude. Nor ought you to be less grateful that you possess a copy of the word of life. When the Bible was first given to the world, few could read it. Very few in the Jewish nation, during their sojourn in the wilderness, could read the “lively oracles.” The Hebrew children had almost no means of literary instruction. The Bible was read to them—read to the assembled tribes at stated periods. Now you know that the privilege of reading the Scriptures yourselves, is far more valuable than that of having these Scriptures only read

to you. You naturally reckon those to have been highly favoured who heard Jesus preaching, and beheld the love of his heart beaming in his countenance—your own ability to read the Redeemer's words, under the influence of the Spirit, is an enjoyment as real, as pure, as high. While his "speech distils as the dew" upon your hearts, your imagination will insensibly portray him in all his loveliness; so that you will exclaim in admiring attachment—"Grace is poured into thy lips."

Besides, the juvenile reader of the Word of God owes much to the art of printing. Of old, copies of it were very scarce and very dear. Few families could procure one. When the Bible was all written on parchment with a pen, it cost a very great deal, for the labour of writing it was great; and after it was bought it could not be very easily read, for the handwriting might be cramp, and it was often marred with blunders, for the copyist was very liable to make mistakes. But the art of printing multiplies copies,—cheap, accurate, legible copies; as if by magic. Magic is now a harmless word, but it was not so in those days, when the art of printing first astonished the world. When Faust sold his printed copies of the Bible for sixty crowns, while the scribes demanded

five hundred for their manuscripts—when he produced copies of perfect uniformity in the form, size, and position of the letters and words, and as speedily as they were demanded, the ignorant and superstitious thought him in league with Satan, and he was tormented and persecuted by those foolish suspicions. You are now reaping the fruit of this noble invention, an invention not unlike the miracle, which, from a few scanty loaves and fishes, fed so many thousands, and left fragments of larger quantity than the original stock. Every child, therefore, may have, ought to have, its own cherished copy of the Bible. “Let this one book,” said Luther, “be familiar to all men’s tongues, hands, eyes, ears, and heart.” “Blessed is he that readeth.”

Bibles, I have said, were very dear. The cost of one can scarce be credited at the present day. A load of hay was sometimes given by the peasantry for a few chapters of the Epistles of Paul or James, at the time when printed English Bibles were cursed by the priests, and forbidden to be read by the King. One Abbot bought a written Bible in nine tomes, for a sum which, in our day, would amount to L.500. A copy of Wycliffe’s version of the New Testament, cost, in 1429, four marks and twenty-pence, or about

twenty-five pounds of our present money. And though these sums, when told in the money of that period, would look much smaller, it is to be borne in mind that the labourer's wages were then very little. Reapers got twopence a-day, and a sheep was sold for a shilling. Twenty years' wages would not have purchased a Bible. Such, therefore, was the high value set upon a copy of the Scriptures, when the scribe, and not the printer, produced them, that when they were given in loan, the borrower was sometimes compelled to give a formal bond for their return. O, what a blessing is a cheap Bible—and now it is the cheapest of books! The God of the Bible has made his own word in our country, as abundant and free as “the rain that cometh down, and the snow from heaven.”

Still further, you are deeply indebted to the translators of the Bible from the original languages into your own mother tongue. The Old Testament was given to the Jews in Hebrew, for it was their national speech, and the New Testament was published in Greek; for, in consequence of the victories of Alexander the Great, and the colonies founded by him and his successors, Greek was in the days of the apostles a kind of universal tongue. The church, in very early times, always took care to have the Bible

translated for the various countries to which the gospel was carried. One author in the fourth century says, that Indians, Syrians, Persians, and Ethiopians had grown wise by such translations. Other writers of that period make similar statements. No book loses less by translation than the Scriptures. They fit themselves for every language, and though in some versions they may resemble Moses when his face was veiled, still their divine splendour gleams through their transparent covering. So we find that holy and patriotic men were employed, in former ages, in translating the Bible into the dialect of this country. The most famous of those early translators was William Tyndale,—a man of simple spirit, pure faith, and heroic zeal, who has consecrated, in his death, that cause to which his eventful life had been laboriously devoted. He has earned a nation's gratitude by his tears and prayers, and toils and blood. Our version, especially the New Testament, is taken from his with few variations. And yet for his work of love, he was oppressed and persecuted. He had to translate and print with as much secrecy as if he had been murdering and stealing; and at last, for the crime of giving the English nation an English Bible, was he apprehended in a foreign land, and on the 6th

October 1536, burnt at the stake.* You will value your English Bible so much the more, that its accuracy has been attested by scholars competent to form a critical estimate of its merits. It is the best, take it all in all, of any authorized translations. Thus, in order that you might enjoy the privilege of reading the Bible, you have been taught to read; and the Bible has been translated and printed. You may be apt to forget such blessings, and such providential methods of furnishing you with a printed English Bible; but surely such kindness on the part of God to you, such arrangements on His part in past ages for your present benefit, ought always to be remembered with praise and gratitude.

And this is not all. Time was, when in this country you would not have been allowed to read the Bible. In the reign of Henry V. a law was passed, declaring, that if any person read the Scriptures in English, they should "forfeit land, cattle, life, and goods for themselves and their heirs for ever, and be condemned as heretics, enemies to the crown, and most arrant traitors to the land." Again in 1543, and in 1546, it was

* Annals of the English Bible, by Christopher Anderson,—a work of patient research, of successful industry, of christian patriotism.

ordained by Act of Parliament, that no artificers, apprentices, journeymen, or any below the rank of the gentry, were to read the Bible to themselves or others, on pain of one month's imprisonment. These prohibitions were the work of Popery, which is ever afraid of the spread of scriptural knowledge. "It loves the darkness." But it was sometimes outwitted. The Bishop of London had a great horror of Tyndale's Testament when it first appeared. He employed a person to buy up an entire edition, that he might make a bonfire of it at St Paul's cross. The money which Tyndale thus got for this impression, enabled him to print a much larger and a more correct edition; and the result was, that Testaments "came over thick and threefold into England, to the great mortification of the Bishop and his Popish friends."* We, in Scotland, are also indebted to a name of which many of you may never have heard before. I refer to Balnavis of Halhill, who in 1543, along with Lord Maxwell, carried an Act through Parliament, for allowing the Scriptures, "baith the New Testament and the Auld," to be translated, and read by the people in the vulgar tongue. O, my young friends, how thankful ought you to be for the privilege of reading the

* Fox's Martyrology.

Bible, "none making you afraid." Many have bled and died to secure you such a blessing—O, esteem it! Praise God for it:—

"The praises of my tongue
I offer to the Lord;
That I was taught and learn'd so young,
To read his Holy Word."

The Bible, then, is meant to be read. That you might be able to read it, God has given it to you not in the "tongue of angels," but in the language of men. No one doubts this purpose of God. Christ said to an inquirer, "How readest thou?" If you do not read the Bible, it can do you no good. It does not work by a charm. The mere possession of a copy cannot enlighten or save you. Feel the holy emotion of the Psalmist—"O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day!" What book possesses so many attractions as the Bible? Its histories are the oldest, its anecdotes are the happiest, its poetry has a peculiar richness and freshness. What biographies so touching and natural as those of Joseph and Ruth? What narratives like those of the gospels in simplicity and beauty? The Bible contains the most wonderful things. It astonishes while it instructs, and delights while it blesses. No wonder, then, that it attracts you

to its hallowed pages. There you become acquainted with creation and its glories, the fall and its woes, the flood and its marvels. There you converse with Abraham, the friend of God and prince of believers, Paul the servant of Christ and the chief of missionaries. There you hear the thunder of Sinai, and behold the temple on Sion. There you fall on your knees with young Samuel, and learn to love the little Prince Abijah. There you enjoy the wondrous sight of the rod of Moses, the ladder of Jacob, the mantle of Elijah, the harp of David, and the throne of Solomon. There you visit the oak of Mamre, the tent of Jacob, the hearth of Job, the palace of Shushan, the manger of Bethlehem, the home of Bethany, the hall of Pilate, the cross of Calvary, the upper room at Pentecost, the quarters of Cornelius, the jail at Philippi, and the imperial dungeons of Rome. There you become familiar with the bowers of Eden, the plain of Shinar, the shores of the Red Sea, the sands of Arabia, the banks of the Jordan, the cedars of Lebanon, the oaks of Bashan, the vines of Eschol, the glory of Carmel, the ships of Tarshish, the skiff on Gennesaret, the Mount of Olives, and the walls, turrets, gardens, palaces, and environs of the city of God,—the metropolis of “thy land, O Immanuel.”

There, too, you are entranced with the sublime visions of Isaiah, or you shed tears in sympathy with the weeping Jeremiah, or you are awed and overcome by the mystic grandeur of Ezekiel, or the unearthly strains of Habakkuk. There, in fine, with John in Patmos, you gaze upward, and "a door is opened in heaven," and you obtain a ravishing glimpse of the brightness, purity, happiness, and pursuits of the New Jerusalem. As the Bible comes from the most glorious of authors, so it is the most glorious of books, and all its varieties of style are meant to draw you to its delighted perusal. No book can be brought into comparison with it. Some books "are of the world; therefore the world loveth them." Yet, how meagre and false are many of them, how little suited to save a soul are all of them! But from the Lord of lords comes the Book of books. It is your's—clasp it to your hearts—"search the Scriptures."

And the Bible is to be read through. It is all meant to be studied. Its very smallness, while it is a proof of its divinity, shows you that God intended you to master the whole of its contents. Its portability is a wonderful blessing. The laws of our country are spread through hundreds of gigantic folios; but the laws of God's kingdom, which endures for ever,

are contained in a book so small, that you can make it a pocket companion. "Thy testimonies are wonderful,"—they are "the men of my counsel." You can carry the "oracles" with you at all times for continued reading and meditation. Long ago, the Bible being printed in a large form, was very scarce in our land, and was chained to the pulpit, or to a pillar in the church, and multitudes crowded around it, while some one read from the ponderous volume. But now, as every family and child have a Bible, small and elegant, you can read it all at your own convenience. It is all inspired, and all profitable. Nothing useless is contained in it. Every section is fraught with hallowed instruction.

How, then, are you to read it ?

1. Read it with reverence. It is God's book. God speaks in it on the most important of all subjects, and in the most solemn of all tones. Verily, God might speak to you in some other way, and you would quake and tremble. Remember Elijah at Horeb. The storm swept past him, the earthquake shook the rocks beneath him, the fire gleamed terribly around him, yet he arose not ; but "after the fire—a still small voice, and it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the

entering in of the cave." The Bible is "the still small voice." O, listen to it! God is in it. It is God's book as no other book is, and man's book as no other book ever can be.

2. Read it with attention. God demands it—demands such honour to his own book. To read it listlessly is to dishonour it, and deprive yourselves of instruction and blessing. Wilberforce was, in his young days, gay and thoughtless, but, while travelling to Nice, he was persuaded by the Rev. Isaac Milner, his companion on the journey, to read along with him, during the way, the Greek New Testament. By this one attentive reading, Wilberforce was changed, and he, who had been "the joy and crown of Doncaster Races,"* became a decided convert—a christian legislator—the crowned friend of the slave. Cowper the poet had been long oppressed with a grievous melancholy, from which nothing could relieve him. In one of those dark fits he says, "I flung myself into a chair near the window, and, seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of Romans iii. 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood.' Immediately I received

* Anecdotes.—The Holy Scriptures.—Tract Society, London.

strength to believe, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me." Luther, in the midst of those agonies, which he had long felt, ere he found peace in Christ, had his attention turned to the clause in Romans i. and 17,—“The just shall live by faith.” It struck him, it penetrated to his heart. It gave him rest, and he would often say in future years, that he still heard a voice saluting him with these precious words,—“The just shall live by faith.” Dr Buchanan tells of a rabbi in India, who had translated the New Testament into Syriac, for the purpose of refuting the Christians of St Thomas who lived in his neighbourhood. But the study of the divine word, necessary to translate it, converted the rabbi himself into a supporter of the very faith he was labouring to subvert. The Earl of Rochester, “a great wit, a great sinner, and a great penitent,” was brought to the knowledge of the truth by a diligent and faithful perusal of the 53d chapter of Isaiah. We know not what good results may follow one serious and attentive perusal of God’s Book, under the serious impression that “the Lord gave the word.”

3. Read it with fondness. Do not open it, as if you were about to engage in an irksome task. Love it. Feel the study of it to be as much a delight as a duty.

It is this enthusiasm, which, in the quaint language of the poet, will make every one of you—

“ A good wit that on the immortal shrine
Of memory, engraves a work divine ;
Abroad, abed, at board, for ever uses,
To mind his theme, and on his book still muses.”

Dr Buchanan, in editing the Syriac New Testament, had to read the proof sheets each five times. But this tedious and minute labour was not irksome. Every new reading brought him fresh delight ; and, not long before his death, he burst into tears at the remembrance of that pleasure, which the frequent revision of the Syriac translation had afforded him.

4. Read it with frequency. If you love it, you will be often reading it. As the infant nestles again and again in its mother’s bosom, in search for its appropriate nutriment, so, “ like new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word.” Desire it with continuous appetite. You can never be tired of it. It is—

“ A perpetual feast of nectar’d sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.”

Improve your present time by constant study of the Bible. “ Oh !” said the great scholar Salmasius on his death-bed,—“ what time, precious time, I

have lost! Should God, in his mercy, grant me another year of life, I would spend all of it in reading David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles."

Improve your present time. The Ethiopian eunuch was improving his time when he received the blessing. He "was returning, and, sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet," when the Spirit sent Philip to give him instruction. Too many in his station are, in similar circumstances, found lolling at their ease in dull vacuity of mind, or reading the last new romance.

Improve your present time. What would not many in past times have given for such a privilege as you possess? Many, in order to read the Bible, had to meet in "dens and caves of the earth." During the persecution of the Nonconformists under James II., one of them copied out the Bible in short hand for his own use, fearing that, if Popery were re-established, the Scriptures would be suppressed. King Alfred, justly named the Great, copied out all the Psalms of David, and carried always in his bosom this Psalter, written with his own hand. He also longed to give his subjects a portion of the precious book, and commenced to translate the Psalms into Anglo-Saxon. In his days, it was as dark as in the early period of Samuel's ministry,—“the Word of the

Lord was precious — there was no open vision." Surely, then, God's kindness to you, summons you to great diligence and anxious improvement. Many advantages elevate you above your forefathers, but the chief of them all is this, that unto you are "committed the oracles of God."

5. Read it with earnest prayer for the blessing. To read it mechanically will not benefit you. King Alfred's prayers to God were long and ardent for Scriptural knowledge. Often, in secret, would he enter a church at night, and remain for many hours in earnest supplication, that God would open his eyes to "behold wondrous things" out of the divine law. And all who have been "mighty in the Scriptures," have engaged in similar exercises. "More light," cried Goethe, when his eyes were closing in death,—more light, more light, is the daily cry of the successful student. And the cry is not in vain. The Father of Lights hears—and the Spirit of Light descends.

" Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings;
It is the Lord that rises
With healing in his wings."

Implore the God of the Bible to enable you to understand, and receive its truth. Plead with Him,

that by his Spirit he would so lead and move you, as to cause you exclaim in wonder and gratitude,—“Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

6. With all these feelings combined within you, read it, in order to know the great blessing which it reveals. That blessing is to you of all things the most valuable. It is salvation from the mercy of God, through the blood of Christ. All things contained in Scripture, are meant to illustrate this glorious gift. You may learn much in Scripture, of history, of antiquity, of minerals, animals, and flowers; but unless you learn how a sinner is saved, your labour is worse than misspent. You may discover in the Bible much to delight you, to exercise your ingenuity, feast your imagination, and gratify your taste; but unless you find in it the way to Him “in whose favour is life,” and whose “loving-kindness is better than life,” you have missed the very truth which the Bible was inspired to reveal, and come short of the very blessing which it was designed to bestow. The trumpet blows to warn you of danger, but you are only charmed with the music of the peal, and forget its purpose. You are so delighted with the ornaments and archi-

ecture of the Temple, as to neglect its altar and prefer its portico to its mercy-seat. You are so amused with the form, richness, and beauty of the cup as to omit to taste the precious elixir which it contains. You admire the foliage, and inhale the fragrance of the tree of life; but you pluck not its fruit, and find it sweet to your taste. O, be warned against such delusion! Let the great end of your reading be the "salvation of your souls." This being your motive, your reward is certain. With what pleasure will you describe the result of your study,—“We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth.” “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

In fine, “give attendance to reading.” It is the great and patent road to knowledge. The mother of Sir William Jones, when answering many of the questions put to her by the inquiring mind of her boy, was in the habit of saying,—“Read, and you will know.” We repeat the advice to you in reference to the Bible. Are you desirous of being made further acquainted with the nature and government of Him who is the greatest and best of Beings?—Read, and you will know. Are you longing to understand the

only way in which you can be saved from wrath, and restored to the image and favour of Jehovah?—Read, and you will know. Is there no curiosity in your hearts, leading you to pant after fuller information as to the truths you are to believe, the precepts you are to obey, the hopes you are to cherish, and the examples you are to follow?—Read, and you will know. Be not content to know these things only by report. It is well that your parents instruct you. It is your duty to be ever making inquiry of them who can teach you divine truth. It would be wrong to neglect any means of knowledge, which your home, your school, and your church may afford you. Yet above all, and in union with all such sources of improvement, forget not our parting maxim,—Read, and you will know. Then shall you feel somewhat of that joyous assurance which animated the Samaritans, as they cried to her who had first told them of Christ, “Now, we believe, not because of thy saying; for WE HAVE HEARD HIM OURSELVES, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”



Understand the Bible.

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MY dear young friends, you will recollect that our second theme of admonition, or rather of mutual converse, was—

UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.—The Bible is meant to be fully and correctly understood. Its truths must be known ere they can be believed. Religion has been sometimes called a right state of feeling towards God. But it is only divine truth, clearly understood and cordially embraced, that can so change the heart as to induce it to love God, and obey his law. Sound Scriptural knowledge thus lays the foundation of religious character; and the more massive and secure the foundation, the safer and more graceful will be the structure reared upon it. Ignorance is both ruinous and inexcusable. The Bible resembles a

chart given to a mariner, but unless he comprehends its peculiar delineations, he cannot be guided by it in his course, so as to shun the fatal rock or quicksand. The Scriptures are able to "make wise unto salvation," but such wisdom is based on knowledge,—or rather, such wisdom is only Scriptural knowledge enlarged, sanctified, and experimental, accompanied by faith, and sealed and blessed by the Spirit of truth. But there have been some periods in the world, and some states of society, when, from prevailing ignorance and sin, knowledge of the Scripture could scarcely be obtained. The Bible was a sealed book—"Men deliver it to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed," Isaiah xxix. 11. Learning without piety cannot understand the Bible, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God;" yea, "the world by wisdom knew not God." "And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I am not learned," Isaiah xxix. 12. The mind of the people is darkened and brutish, and "they are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Such is the description of the prophet Isaiah—so it was among the Jews—so it was in this country before the Reformation. The learned would not, and the

unlearned could not, understand the truths of God's word. But the noble prophecy of Tyndale has now been fulfilled—for once, disputing with a popish priest, he affirmed, that if “God spared his life, before many years were gone by, a ploughboy should know more of the Scriptures than his adversary did, though learned and a priest.” This blessed facility has come upon you.

And now, my young pupils, the Bible is easily understood. What it concerns you most to know, is told in simple and striking phraseology. The truths which are essential to salvation are delivered to you in plain and earnest statement; the style in which the great facts of redemption are unfolded resembles themselves—“is majestic in its own simplicity.” Your lost condition as fallen, guilty, and helpless sinners—the intense and unchanging love of God to a ruined and dying world—the infinite condescension of Him who came to earth robed in your nature, to obey the law you had broken, and suffer the penalty you had incurred—the exhaustless value of the Lord's atonement, and the kind, continued, and gratuitous offer of his salvation to men,—the value and necessity of faith—the enlightening, renewing, and sealing influences of the Holy Ghost—the possession of personal

holiness—the resurrection of the dead, and the glories, felicities, and pursuits of the better world,—all these portions of Scripture are told in language of amazing clearness, repeated with impressive frequency, and enforced with awful power. Truths such as these are described in sentences so lucid, that all may understand them, and are clothed in imagery so natural and graphic, that all may be struck with their beauty, and convinced of their value; that all may be able not only to grasp them in their minds, but to paint them in unfading colours on the tablets of their memory. So plainly, fully, precisely, and prominently are all essential truths revealed, that “he may run that readeth.” But, my young friends, you know the declaration of the Apostle, “ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.” You must strive to understand the “whole counsel of God.” You are never to seek to be wise *above* what is written, but you are always to labour to be wise *up* to what is written. Yet while all is true, while there are in Scripture, as Dr Owen says, “fords where a lamb may wade, there are also depths in which an elephant may swim,” there are difficulties in the interpretation of the Bible. For,

1. The Bible is an Eastern book. The customs

and scenery referred to in it are foreign to us. We must therefore know something of these, or else many of its beauties will escape us, and we shall mistake the point and truth of many of its allusions. It requires some effort and application to familiarise our minds with Oriental habits of thought and modes of expression. And it is in consequence of such allusions, that, as Jonathan Edwards * says, "there is a strange and unaccountable kind of enchantment, if I may so speak, in Scripture history, which, though it is destitute of all rhetorical ornaments, makes it vastly more pleasant, agreeable, easy, and natural, than any other history whatever. It shines bright with the amiable simplicity of truth. The Scripture sets forth things just as they happened, with the minute circumstances of time, place, situation, gesture, habit, &c., in such a natural manner, that we seem to be actually present." If the Bible had contained less allusion to Eastern customs, its life and its naturalness would have been greatly impaired. Its pictures are exact copies, without any modifying shade or tint. "They need not the foreign aid of ornament." Love, then, the fresh and glowing East,—let its rivers and plains, and mountains and cities, become familiar to your minds.

* Works, viii. 197.

The East has a peculiar charm—the cradle of man, the scene of his redemption, the land of his Bible, the region whence “the day-spring from on high hath visited us.”

2. There are mysteries in the Bible,—things above and beyond the reach of our penetration. Those mysteries are contained in the Scriptures, because of their relation to important truth. Every truth lies indeed in the bosom of a mystery. We could not have understood the plan of salvation, as secured by the blood of Christ and applied by the Spirit, unless the fact of a Trinity had been revealed; but the Trinity in itself is, and remains, a great and unsearchable mystery. “Such knowledge,” says the Psalmist, “is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” There are mysteries on every side of us. We live and move in the midst of them. And why, if they are found in nature, may they not be expected in revelation? The works of the same author have a family likeness. The Bible often gives us the fact, but does not explain the manner in which it exists. The fact is enough for us—a sufficient foundation for our faith. It could not have been otherwise in a Divine revelation, for there earth is in fellowship with heaven, the simple verges on the profound,

the finite touches the infinite, the seen borders on the invisible, and time is brought into immediate contact with eternity. Such mysteries, moreover, are not without their benignant uses. "God," say an old Father,* "has in the Scripture veiled his mysteries in clouds, that the love of truth in men might be inflamed by the very difficulty of apprehending it. For were there in Scripture only what we could easily comprehend, there would, on our part, be neither studious search, nor yet the sweetness of finding truth."

3. Many difficulties in the interpretation of the Bible arise from ourselves. We have too much pride and prejudice in our hearts. We first form our own opinions, and then come to the word of God to seek support for them. If a mind is determined not to believe certain truths, it will not find them. Such a person blinds himself, and then no species of proof can be discerned by him. The plainest texts make no impression on him. A man once said to John Newton, "I have read the whole Bible from beginning to end, and I do not see one single proof of Christ's divinity in it all." "No wonder," replied Mr Newton, "I once went to the

* Augustine.

fire to light my candle and I could not succeed, for I had put the extinguisher upon it." This Unitarian had put an extinguisher upon his mind when he read the Bible; therefore all its light upon the Godhead of Christ was prevented from entering his benighted soul. Come then, to the word of God, in humble and earnest docility; read with a sincere and honest desire to be instructed. Let every one of you say, as he opens the blessed volume, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Whatever the Bible says, receive on the authority of God. Conscious of your own ignorance, open your mind to Divine illumination. As a flower placed in a dark chamber instinctively turns even to the faintest ray that may struggle into the gloom, so let your hearts ever be turning to the radiancy of the Sun of Righteousness. If any of you were about to be taught a science, how foolish would it be to form first your own ideas of what must be its nature, and then to insist, in the face of a competent instructor, that your notions gathered so hastily in your previous ignorance, were better than his expositions, and greatly preferable to his mathematical demonstrations. Equally foolish is it for any person first to imagine that the Bible ought to contain what

he thinks is true, and then to come to it, resolved to find in it nothing else than his own cherished opinion. You perceive the natural and immediate result,—he will not allow the Bible to speak its own meaning, but he imposes his favourite sense upon it. He tries to bribe the oracle,—he is determined that it shall not teach him certain truths; he twists and perverts all the texts opposed to his own view, and so “handles the word of God deceitfully.” Are you not all ready to cry out? Such conduct is very sinful, insulting to the Bible, and fatal to the man who is its guilty victim. Yes, my friends, it is. Let it be a warning to you. Always lie open to conviction; never fore-close your minds against any doctrine that God’s word may teach. It is a Christian privilege and duty to be “increasing in the knowledge of God;” and though there be in the Bible, some things “hard to be understood,” I hope you will never be classed among the “unlearned and unstable,” who “wrest” these, “as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

As an incitement to understand the Bible, I implore you, then, my young friends, to be more and more deeply impressed with the evil of ignorance. Not to know the Bible, is not to know God or happiness. I

counsel you most earnestly, not to be contented with small or partial knowledge of divine truth. Your faith in such a case is limited, your feelings may become unguarded, and you are in jeopardy of being "carried about with every wind of doctrine." Ever aim at clear and just conceptions of the will of God. To see "men as trees walking," is a state of painful uncertainty and danger. Never fancy that you have enough of knowledge, or that you understand the Scriptures fully, but cherish that lowly, anxious and inquiring frame of mind, in which you will be always prepared for having "expounded to you the way of God more perfectly." You will thus never tire of labouring to see more of the mind of God in his work, and to feel more of the heart of God in his salvation. New glimpses of truth will break in upon you; you will resemble the traveller ascending the hill, every new eminence he gains showing him more and more of the beauties of the surrounding landscape; and urging him still to climb to a higher pinnacle, that the compass of his vision may be increased. Therefore though children in age, "in understanding be men."

It is no less your duty always to strive after a correct understanding of Scripture. Let this desire be

come a habit with you. The pursuit of knowledge is always a pleasant task. Keep before you the example of Jesus. His mind exerted itself. You find him at the age of twelve, in the midst of the doctors, "both hearing them, and asking them questions." You can scarce form an idea of the pleasure attendant on any discovery in science, or invention in art. When something new has been examined and proved, how the heart of the discoverer beats with joy—how he feels an ample reward for years of toil and privation. And will you feel no joy, no rapture, when you obtain additional information concerning God, or eternity, and are fast arriving at the possession of "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." O, then, "take fast hold of instruction, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life." Let not the word of God lie beside you in neglect, and never read it in a drowsy or careless spirit. To read, and not to attempt to understand, is beneath the dignity of a rational being. It is doing despite to the human composers and to the divine Author of revelation. The prophets and apostles "will rise up in the judgment" and condemn such indifference. Their appeal against negligent youth

will be terrible indeed. I wrote, Moses will say, of your Creator, of your fall, and of a coming Saviour—the woman's seed, but you would not comprehend. I sung, will be the burden of Isaiah, of a child born, and a son given, and proclaimed his divine dignity, and human birth, his bloody suffering, and royal triumph, but ye understood not. Apostles will echo the complaint, and cry—we portrayed the life, actions, and death of the Son of Mary, we preached his cross, unfolded his salvation, and pressed it upon you in "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," but you remained in ignorance. Providence will respond, in the voice of "the seven thunders,"—I preserved the book of God for so many centuries. I arranged that the art of printing should be an invention preceding your birth, and that you should not be born in a land where no Bible is, or where the study of it is proscribed. I raised up faithful and learned translators, and gave you the Scriptures in your own tongue, but you were not induced to inscribe this motto on your Bible, "Whoso readeth, let him understand." And the Spirit himself will urge against you the fearful indictment,—my "inspiration gave you understanding," but you would not use its powers. I appealed often to each of you, and said, "Understand-

est thou what thou readest?" but ye listened not. I was promised to open the "eyes of your understanding," and lead you into the "deep things of God," yet ye did not solicit my assistance. "But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you," and trust that you already "know the first principles of the oracles of God." Be not, however, always "babes, and such as have need of milk;" but acquire a relish for the "strong meat, which belongeth to them that are of full age."



How to Understand the Bible.

LET me now present you with a few remarks as to the best way of coming at a correct knowledge of the Bible. The space is limited, and I shall endeavour to give the following observations all conciseness and simplicity.

The Bible is composed in human language, and is to be interpreted as any other ancient book. The power of interpretation, that is of understanding what another speaks or writes, is among the earliest which you acquired. When you were in your cradle, you could interpret both your mother's smile and your mother's words, and when you understood your playmates' language, you were instinctively practising the art of interpretation. It is therefore nothing

new to you. The same rules by which you were enabled to comprehend the prattle of a parent's fondness, or the phrases of a companion's conversation, are just those which are to be applied to any book, in order to learn its ideas and master its contents. Thus :

1. Remember that every word has a meaning. The meaning of a clause would be altered were any word omitted. The sense of a verse is only the united signification of all the words contained in it. Never then pass lightly or lazily over any word which you may not at the moment comprehend,—strive by your dictionary, by appeal to your parents or teachers, to come to the knowledge of it. You will find this a good habit to cultivate, for the “ words of the Lord are tried words,” and therefore no word has been written in vain. It stands for some idea. Human authors do not employ words without purpose,—and the Spirit of God, in giving you the Bible, has written no useless vocable. The smallest words or particles have each its own signification. You read, for example, in Heb. ii. 14, “ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” Now the small words “ also” and “ likewise,” both occur in the last

clause, and we are apt to regard them as having no difference of meaning,—yet they are quite distinct. “Also” signifies as well as,—Christ partook of flesh and blood, “also,” or, as well as the children. “Likewise” means—in the same way; he partook of flesh and blood, “likewise,” or in the same way as the children do,—born and nursed as an infant, and passing through youth into manhood. Let every word thus engage your attention, let not the smallest be beneath your regard. “He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.” This saying is true of the interpretation of Scripture.

But, my young friends, there is one circumstance which may create some difficulty in your way of fully understanding the Bible, which I shall very shortly state and illustrate. It is, that our present translation is now two hundred years old; and some words used in the Bible by our translators, have, in the course of two centuries, changed their meaning. They are therefore to be understood not in their present, but in their old sense. Thus, the word *let*, now means only to permit, but long ago it also denoted to hinder, and is so to be understood in Isaiah xliii. 13, where God says, “I will work and who shall let it?” that is, prevent it. So in 2 Thessal. ii. 7,

“he who letteth will let,” *i. e.*, he who restraineth will restrain.

So with the word *charity*. In its old English sense it signified love, and is so to be understood in the Bible. Some have forgotten this, and when they read in 1 Peter iv. 8, “charity shall cover the multitude of sins,” they suppose that on account of his generosity or giving of alms, a man’s sins shall be pardoned, whereas the real meaning is, love shall conceal many faults, and therefore promote unity and peace. The term *conversation*, which occurs so frequently in Scripture, is also used in its old sense as denoting the whole course of life, and not, as in modern times, merely an interchange of words. The word “*carriage*” or “*carriages*” signifies not wheeled vehicles, but baggage, 1 Sam. xvii. 22; Isaiah x. 28; Acts xxi. 15. The word “*passion*” found in Acts i. 3, in the clause, “to whom he showed himself after his passion,”—signifies, as in old English, suffering, and does not at all refer to temper or undue mental excitement. The word “*rooms*” in the declaration, Matt. xxxiii. 6, “and love the uppermost rooms at feasts,” does not mean chambers, but only places or seats. The words “*the atonement*,” Rom. v. 11, denote the reconciliation. The term is here

used in its literal sense, for it is originally at-one-ment, or agreement,—the bringing of two foes to be at one. Thus Shakspeare says :—

“ He seeks to make atonement (peace, or agreement),
Between the Duke of Glo'ster and your brothers.”

The word “*earing*” in such phrases as these, “*earing nor harvest*,” Gen. xlv. 6 ; Exodus xxxiv. 21, does not refer to ears of grain, and therefore does not signify autumn. It refers to spring, and to the ploughing of the soil, and is used in its original sense, for it comes from the Anglo-Saxon verb, *erian*, to plough, and is a sister term with the word—*harrow*. These instances may suffice for a specimen.

2. Familiarise your minds with the nature and use of figurative language. You all use it, in almost every sentence you utter. When you say of a bold man—he is a lion ; or of a raging man—he is a tiger ; you use the two words—*lion* and *tiger*, in a figurative sense. There is no mystery about figurative language. Many ideas can be expressed in no other way. Operations of the mind, spiritual objects, abstract notions, can only thus be described. So God says, “ I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets.” While, therefore, a word may have a variety of significations, it can only have

one in the place where it occurs. The English word, letters, has at least three meanings. I may say,—the child learns its letters,—the man of business writes letters,—Goldsmith was a man of letters. The term has these different senses, yet no one could mistake its real meaning in any such phrases. Lead, has weight, the opinion of Matthew Henry has weight. In the first clause, the word “weight” is literal, in the second, it is figurative; but who does not at once perceive the meaning of the figure? Were then ordinary intelligence brought to the figures in the Bible, unless in some peculiar cases, the proper meaning might be easily apprehended. The Bible says, God is a “sun,” a “shield,” a “rock.” Every one feels at once the power and beauty of such modes of speech. Christ says, “this is my body broken for you.” Papists take this in a literal sense, and fall into the grossest of all blunders—alike opposed to the senses, to reason, and to Scripture. Their doctrine, that a priest’s prayer changes a wafer into a god, to be swallowed by his worshipper, comes from “a strong delusion that they should believe a lie.” Volumes have been written to show their error. It is altogether wrong to allege, as is sometimes done by Protestants, that Christ could not say, This is like, or this repre-

sents, my body, because the language he spoke in, had no verbs of this meaning. It must be a language of great scantiness and poverty indeed, that has no verbs denoting similitude or representation. Christ's mother-tongue had abundance of them, if he had chosen to use them. But the best process of refutation is easy and simple. Christ says, "I am the vine," "I am the door." Jacob says of two of his sons, "Judah is a lion's whelp," "Benjamin is a ravening wolf." Nobody mistakes the meaning of those figures of speech, and the words of the Redeemer are precisely similiar in kind. Who would ever dream that Jacob meant to affirm that two of his sons had been changed into quadrupeds, and yet he uses language as strong and peculiar as did the Redeemer. The people of the East delight in such striking metaphors. Instead of saying, the name of the Lord resembles a strong tower,—they simply say, "the name of the Lord is a strong tower." Their warm minds neglect the word denoting similitude. Likeness is to them sameness. Endeavour then to know the meaning of the words which the Holy Spirit has employed,—"The wise shall understand." "Every sentence of the Bible," Bishop Horsley observes, "is from God, and every man is interested in the meaning of it."

In intimate connexion with figurative language, may be mentioned those peculiar persons, events, and things, which are usually termed types. But what is a type? It is not merely a symbol of some future person or event—it is also a prediction—it is a prophetic symbol. The sacrifices under the laws were types—they were both symbols or likenesses, and they were prophecies. They were symbols or representations, for they showed how by the blood of an innocent creature slain in his room, a sinner was forgiven,—and they were prophecies, for they at the same time foretold the certainty of that oblation, whose blood “cleanseth from all sin.” Every sacrifice showed how atonement was made, and assured the worshipper that it would be made. It was both a symbol and a prophecy—in other words a type. Now, who can ordain such types? Only God, who alone has this prerogative. And how shall we know that types have been ordained? Only when he tells us. There are, therefore, no types, save those that Scripture recognises. We dare not make types, or create them to ourselves by any fanciful ingenuity. If you keep those truths in view, then, in this province of investigation, in “His light shall you see light.”

Again, it is difficult to understand many portions of

prophecy; its style and allusions are sometimes obscure; yet, what concerns our duty and our safety is clearly revealed. The parables of Christ, which are a kind of allegory, or story constructed to convey important truth, usually explain themselves, either in the preface or conclusion; or the design of them may be gathered from the circumstances in which they were delivered. And they generally contain ONE PRIMARY TRUTH; every minute circumstance is not to be spiritualized. We are not to put upon any portion of the Bible, a sense which it was not designed to bear. To add to, is just as bad as to take from, the meaning of Scripture. The following example may suffice for an illustration of my meaning. In the gospel of Luke, a lawyer to whom our Lord had expounded the law of universal love, and had exhorted to love his neighbour as himself—put the question to the Saviour, “And who is my neighbour?” The Saviour answered him by reciting a parable, which described a man whom robbers had plundered and almost slain, whose miserable condition excited no compassion in the hearts of a priest and Levite, though they saw him lying in his blood; but who was, at length, kindly relieved by the sympathy and beneficence of a passing Samaritan. The lawyer’s ques-

tion was, Who is my neighbour? and the reply is, every one in distress, whatever his creed or his race. This reply is contained in the story, and is enforced in our Lord's own application of the parable, "Go, thou, and do likewise." Yet, this plain interpretation of Christ himself, has been often set aside by perverse fancy. As early as the fifth century, it was asserted, that the man going down to Jericho was Adam; that the thieves were the devil and his angels, who robbed him of immortality, and left him all but dead; that the priest and Levite represent the Mosaic dispensation; that the good Samaritan is Christ; that the oil and wine are the comfort and blessings of his gospel; that the beast on which He rode, is his humanity; that the setting of the wounded man on that beast is vicarious salvation; that the inn is the church; and the twopence, "the life that now is, and that which is to come." You will at once see that such laborious trifling is very wretched misinterpretation; a complete denial of the very meaning which the Great Teacher put upon the parable itself. The simplest meaning is generally the correct one. Always love such simplicity, and you will "understand more than the ancients." The Bible is not a book of subtle fancies, or abstruse mysteries. It is pervad-

ed by a living principle of earnest simplicity. The simplicity of nature reigns in revelation :—

“The very law that moulds a tear,
And makes it trickle from its source;
That law preserves the globe a sphere,
And guides the planets in their course.”

3. You will find great help in understanding the Bible from a knowledge of Eastern manners and customs. The Bible, as already remarked, is an Eastern book, and there are many little tracts* written to give you the requisite information. By studying them you will not be greatly perplexed when you come to read the word of God. Thus, we know that in the east, the shepherd does not drive his sheep before him, but calls them by name, and they go after him. So Jesus says, “my sheep hear my voice and they follow me.” In Isaiah xvi. 1, you read, “Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land,” &c. Some good men have supposed that the “lamb” means Christ, and that the clause signifies that we are to send the knowledge of Christ to foreign countries.

* A very good little book on this subject has been published by the London Tract Society, and is named, *Manners and Customs of the Jews.*

But the meaning of the verse only is, send the usual tribute to the governor—for the tribute of Moab, the kingdom addressed in the verse, was paid in a hundred thousand lambs, 2 Kings iii. 4.

You read in Matthew, that our Lord forbade his disciples on their missionary journey to take “staves;” while in Mark, you find that they were allowed “one staff only.” You would think one staff enough for a traveller. But travellers in the east have often two staves, one to assist them in walking, the other being held over the shoulder with their bag or wallet suspended from it. Now, as the disciples were to carry no “scrip” or bag, they did not need the second staff.

John “lay in the bosom” of Jesus at the last supper. You can only understand this position by remembering that guests at a feast reclined on couches, and lay on their left side, so that the head of the one guest approached the breast of the other. Neither could you know how “new wine bursts old bottles,” or how, as is said in Joshua, the Gibeonites presented “bottles old, and rent, and bound up,” unless you were informed that in those countries, vessels, called bottles, were not made of glass, but of the skin of animals. The proud Pharisee, whom our

Lord portrays in Luke xviii. 12, exclaims in his arrogance, "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." The law enjoined both fasting and tithe-paying, but the boast of this worshipper was, that he did more than the law required. The law commanded a yearly fast, but he fasted "twice in the week." The law ordered tithe to be paid only from certain kinds of produce, but he gave the tenth of all his property.

In Matthew ix. 20, a female invalid is said to have touched the hem of our Saviour's robe, in full expectation of being cured. The "hem" which she touched, was the tassel or fringe, which, by divine command, ornamented the national uniform of the Jews. This "hem," forming the subject of special directions in Numbers xv. 38, had therefore a peculiar sort of sacredness attached to it by the people; and, in unison with so general a feeling, the woman selected this portion of the Saviour's dress, as a likely means of conveying miraculous remedy to her enfeebled constitution.

Isaiah says of Messiah (ix. 6), "The government shall be upon his shoulder." The shoulder is not here represented as merely bearing a load; but, as was usual in the east, and in ancient times, it is em-

ployed as the symbol of rule and sovereignty. Kings and Heroes, in Hindoo mythology, issue from the shoulder of Brahma. On the shoulder of the statue of Sesostris, King of Egypt, occurs the inscription, "I have acquired this province by my shoulders." The shoulder pieces of the high priest's ephod, ornamented with two onyx stones, set in gold, were its distinguishing portion. To this old custom, may be traced the modern practice of adorning the shoulders of military men with epaulettes.

The Psalmist likens himself in Psalm cii. 7, to "a sparrow alone on the house top." Now, this bird is not one that sits and pines in solitude; but a distinguished naturalist, in a recent publication, suggests that the bird referred to by the Psalmist, is a species of thrush, "remarkable through all the east for sitting solitary on the habitations of men,"—"alone on the housetop, it warbles in sweet and plaintive strains." It is of a blue colour, with black wings and tail. To this bird, so often seen alone and pouring forth notes of melancholy tone, the royal penitent compares his own condition and exercises. In Hosea xiv. 3, penitents returning to God, are represented as saying, "We will not ride upon horses." This may appear a strange vow, but

the meaning is, we will not seek the help of Egypt in time of danger. Egypt was of old famous for its horses and cavalry; Isaiah xxxi. 1. These are but a few examples, adduced to show you how knowledge of Eastern manners and antiquities throws light upon Scripture, light ever pleasing and ever welcome; and to assure you especially, that by a familiar acquaintance with Jewish usages, you will understand and relish many bold figures and many beautiful allusions in the Word of God. You will rejoice like Paul, to become in this respect "debtor to the Jew."

4. In order to understand the Bible, be always careful to keep the context in memory. By the context, I mean what stands before and after the clause you are studying, and is connected with it. The course of thought and illustration throws light on every part, and determines to a great extent the meaning of the various sections. The Psalmist says in Psalm xlii.—"When shall I come and appear before God?" These words, if they stood by themselves, might refer to the period of death and judgment, but the context shows that they only contain the expression of David's anxiety when in banishment to be restored to his former privileges, the most eminent of which was the enjoyment of God's presence in his

sanctuary. The appearance before God referred to, is appearance before him in his house, "with a multitude that kept holiday."

In Proverbs xxvi. 4, 5, you find two injunctions which seem at first of an opposite nature—"answer not a fool according to his folly," and "answer a fool according to his folly;" but the latter clause of each of the two verses determines the meaning of the first. The first—"answer not a fool according to his folly"—means, answer him not in a foolish way; the reason given is, "lest thou be like unto him." The second—"answer a fool according to his folly"—signifies, answer him as his folly warrants or deserves; for the reason annexed plainly proves it, "lest he be wise in his own conceit." In Luke xiii. 24, you find the assertion—"Many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Many persons have been startled and alarmed by this declaration, as if Christ had said—that during some period on earth returning sinners should be rejected by God. Such an opinion cannot be correct. Christ is misunderstood. The context shows that the punctuation is defective. The full period at the end of the verse should only have been a comma, showing that the sense is not complete till the following words at least are taken in, "when

once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door." After this awful period, admission is impossible. You are aware that the punctuation is not inspired; and that, even in the English Bibles, errors have crept in along with variations from the early editions. But also in the old manuscripts, there were no stops to guide the sense. Neither were there verses or chapters. The oldest of the manuscripts written in capitals, resembles the following clause of the Lord's Prayer printed thus :—

‘OURFATHERWHICHARTINHEAVENHAL-
‘LOWEDBETHYNAMETHYKINGDOMCOME.’

The divisions of chapters and verses are modern and sometimes faulty, and we are not to be bound by them in endeavouring to ascertain the context.

No translation, too, can be perfect; it will sometimes fail to give the whole sense of the original. Such failures sometimes occur in our version. In Matthew xxiii. 24, are found the strange words—“Which strain at a gnat.” Now the word *at* appears to be a misprint for *out*, which is the right term. The Bishop's Bible, which our translators were bound to follow, reads—“Which strain out a gnat.” If a gnat be in the

wine, they strain out the insect by pouring the liquid through a piece of gauze or fine cloth.

The parents of Jesus were in great consternation at the thought that they had lost their son ; and when they returned in their search to Jerusalem they found him in the temple. To their reproof, the answer of Jesus was—"How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke ii. 49. Now the words "about my Father's business" are not a happy rendering of the Greek idiom. The better version is—Wist ye not that it became me to be in my Father's house? The temple was his Father's house ; and the spirit of his reply seems to be—Why did ye put yourselves to all this needless trouble in seeking for me? Where will ye find a child more readily or more naturally than in his Father's house? It is the place where he should be ; and they who wish to see him should go there, assured of finding him. To seek him elsewhere is labour lost. Did ye not suspect, that as God's only Son, I should at once be discovered in my Father's house? My Father's house is my loved home.

One petition of the Lord's prayer, you know, is thus read—"Give us each day our daily bread." Now the same idea occurs twice in the clause, and

instead of "daily bread," perhaps the better version would be, necessary bread. Give us each day the bread of our subsistence, or what is enough to sustain us in life.

When, as recorded in Matthew xx. 20, the ambitious mother of Zebedee's children, solicited honour and preferment for her two sons, the Saviour replies—"To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared of my Father." Now, Christ in this translation disclaims all prerogative, nay the very prerogative which he shall exercise when he sits on the throne of his glory. But as you know, the words printed in italics are a supplement; and in this place are a very unwarranted supplement; not merely modifying but changing the sense. The sense is perfect without these unauthorised words—"To sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, save to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." Christ affirms his right to give, and specifies those on whom the gift will be bestowed. It is also to be borne in mind, as a good rule for enabling you to understand an Epistle—that you ought to acquaint yourselves with the character and circumstances of the people to whom the Epistle is sent, and with the

great purpose for which it was written. These two things, when ascertained, are of very great help, and serve the same purpose as a good light for viewing a picture. You should thus, my young friends, be diligent in comparing "things spiritual with spiritual." In this way you will find that difficulties vanish, and that apparent contradictions are removed. I trust that all of you have a Concordance. By a wise use of it you will derive invaluable assistance. The Bible is its own best interpreter.

5. Receive no interpretation, the nature and reasons of which you do not understand or approve. Let your own mind be freely, fully, patiently, prayerfully exercised on the Word of God. Take no opinion on mere authority, or from mere tradition. Let there be simple, cordial, unreserved submission in your hearts to the voice of Scripture. Never thrust your own opinions or fancy upon the Bible. "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." Such philosophy tortures Scripture to find in it its own figments. But be it your desire to receive the kingdom of God as little children.

Meanings which are erroneous, are sometimes attached to portions of the Bible; and these, when handed down by tradition, acquire a wide currency, and

an unchallenged reception. Be on your guard against them. It has, for instance, been asserted for many years, and it is still generally believed, that the summit of Tabor was the scene of our Lord's Transfiguration. There is, however, no warrant for this assertion in the gospels. It was not heard of in the early centuries, and was only mentioned first, at a time when superstition busied itself among relics, to make them objects of worship, and among localities to build upon them idolatrous shrines. And not only is there no authority for believing Tabor to be the spot, but it has been proved, that both before, during, and after Christ's time, the top of the hill was occupied by a town and a Roman garrison,—and therefore had neither the requisite space nor seclusion which Jesus enjoyed on "an high mountain apart."*

Hosea iv. 17, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." This verse is often, if not generally, understood as referring to the withdrawal of all divine influence from the obstinate and incorrigible, as if it contained God's decree, or were thus to be read, I will let him alone. The meaning, however, is very different. The prophet is addressing Judah, and she is warned not to follow apostate Israel. The words

* Matthew xvii. 1.

“let him alone” are a portion of the remonstrance. The full reading is, let thou him alone ; and in these words, God says simply to Judah, have nothing more to do with him. The verb is the second person of the imperative mood.

Isaiah vi. 8, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ?” These words are often used, as if they had been spoken by the Father to the Son, in reference to the scheme of mercy. But it is the Son who is seated on the throne, and by whom these words are uttered ; for “these things, said Esaias, when he saw His glory ;” John xii. 39. The speaker is Christ, the person sent is Isaiah.

Job ii., “Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life.” This declaration of Satan is sometimes said to be almost the only truth he ever uttered. Yet he never spake a more malignant falsehood, for he meant to insinuate that Job would rather give up his religion than die. And there have been thousands since the age of Job, who did not, and would not, give all they had for their life. They died rather than become apostates. Every martyr who has bled or been burned for his religion, is a refutation of Satan’s bold and accusing lie. It is a calumny—piety is not, as Satan intimated, a species of

selfishness. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

1 Thessalonians iv. 16, "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." This statement is often thought to prove the notion, that the righteous shall rise before the wicked. But in this passage, there is no mention made of the wicked, no comparison instituted between them and the righteous. The comparison is, between such as are dead, and those who shall be found alive at the coming of Christ; and the apostle merely affirms in the words quoted, that the dead shall rise before the living are changed, so that "they who are alive shall not prevent (go before) them that are asleep."

Perhaps, too, were you to examine the context, you would come to the conclusion, that the words in Job xiv. 14, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait;" refer not to the remaining period of the patriarch's life, but to the duration of his abode in the grave. His exclamation is:—

"O! that thou wouldest conceal in the grave;
That thou wouldest hide me till thy wrath be over;
That thou wouldest assign for me a decreed period;
And so remember me.

But Job does not seek annihilation, he had the hope of a resurrection.

(After a man dies, shall he live again?)

✓ I will wait all the days of my appointed subjugation,
Till my release come.

We might multiply other instances, but we refrain. Is it not then, my young friends, incumbent on you to "prove all things." Be always in this cautious, but believing state of mind. Your knowledge will thus increase. "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will yet be wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning." Let your heart aspire to all the truth, even that truth, "the daughter of heaven, only bred up here below in christian hearts, between two grave and holy nurses, the doctrine and the discipline of the gospel."*

6. Always study the Bible in its connexion with Christ. The Bible is the word of Christ,—the word of Christ, for he has given it by his Spirit—the word of Christ, for he is its great, its one subject—the word of Christ, for its object is to commend him to sinners, and to promote his glory. Its histories describe him, and his testimony is the spirit of its prophecies. Its

* Milton.

long genealogies refer to his human descent ; and the Mosaic dispensation owns him as its Lord and Law-giver. The work of creation is detailed in its first chapter, that we might understand what the evangelist affirms when he says, "all things were made by him." From Genesis to the Apocalypse he is "all and in all." Prophets, poets, annalists, evangelists, and apostles, are indeed stars in the spiritual firmament, but they borrow their splendour from the Sun of Righteousness. Recollect what Jesus said to the disciples, Luke xxiv. 27,—“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” The Bible is Christ’s book, and his close and constant union with it throws light on every page. Always feel this vital and joyous truth, and you will have a guide to the meaning of scripture, better than all the laws of bare criticism, and all the learning of mere scientific research. Then shall you enter into the spirit of the Psalmist when he says, “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.”

7. Seek to understand the Bible in earnest prayer for the Holy Spirit. “He shall take of mine,” says Christ, “and show it unto you.” The Bible has been

given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and as its author, he knows its true meaning, and will give it to the humble inquirer. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." He will give you that patient, docile frame of mind, in which you are prepared to be "taught of God." He will not impart new revelations, but he will make you spiritually-minded, so that you will know fully, and feel powerfully, the truth as it is in Jesus. You will therefore see that men who have not the Spirit, misunderstand the Bible. They have no sympathy with its spiritual truths. Alas, melancholy examples of this truth are abundant in every age of the church. Men "having not the Spirit" have not consented "to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness," have become "proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words."

Never, never, I conjure you, read the Scriptures, without asking the assistance of the Spirit. Invoke his presence, and that presence will shed light over your mind, and love through your heart. "He will guide you into all truth,"—give you that taste for the truths of Scripture which will qualify you to adore their value, perceive their divinity, bow to their

power, and relish and enjoy them as "sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." By the Spirit you become united to him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" and who said himself, "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me." You have here a promise to plead, and God will fulfil it. Has he not said? "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Implore the fulfilment of this promise, and with lowly confidence "put Him in remembrance." And O, if a gracious answer be given to your prayers, then the words another prophet has written, will be accomplished in you,— "Your daughters shall prophesy,"—the Spirit that unfolded glorious truth to the prophets shall disclose it to you; and "your young men shall see visions"—shall behold the glory of Jehovah in the face of his Son, shall look upon the great atonement in its perfection and splendour, and shall obtain a glimpse of those pure and rapturous joys, which "are at God's right hand for evermore." How earnestly, how frequently, should not you intreat the enjoyment of such promises. Were you to be as fervent as you ought, then would the blessed prediction be true of you

—“ All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” And this divine knowledge, divinely acquired, shall never leave you, but shall be like to—

“ The morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven.”



Believe the Bible.

My third theme was, as you remember, Believe the Bible.

Having read and understood the Bible you are to believe it. You must know the nature and contents of its message, ere you can trust it. I do not mean that you must understand all Scripture ere you receive it as God's word, for in such a case faith would be impossible, as there are many things in Scripture above your comprehension. There are mysteries in nature; and they may be expected also in the book of grace. Yet you must know the leading facts and doctrines of the gospel before you can believe. Faith must have an object as well as a foundation. Why then do you look upon the Bible

as the word of God? for what reason do you regard it as inspired? how know you that it has come from heaven? You ought, my young friends, to be able to answer such questions, "to be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh you, a reason of the hope that is in you." You should have clear and accurate ideas on this subject, and not mere vague and floating notions; you should be as firmly convinced of the divinity of Scripture as you are of your own existence; and you should be prepared to state the grounds of such convictions.

And, first of all, feel deeply convinced of the need of a divine revelation. Saving truth is beyond the discovery of man. His intellect could not reason it out, his imagination could not invent it, his heart did not dare to hope for it, or aspire to its possession. The problem, how can God be a "just God and a Saviour," is too profound for man to solve. How shall guilty man be pardoned and the majesty of the law be maintained? is a question which the united ingenuity of mankind could not answer, for they could not determine the previous difficulty,—Shall sinners be pardoned at all? The heathen world, both ancient and modern, affords ample evidence, that men "did not like to retain God in their knowledge"—"having the understanding dark-

ened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hearts." Their notions of a divine Being were low and obscure, unworthy and puerile, dark and corrupting—for "they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things." They bowed to "gods many and lords many." Of the one living and true God they had no idea. Each country had its deities and temples, each city its own idols and shrines. Victims smoked, and incense burned, in honour of gods whose character was a horrid mixture of debauchery and blood. Nay, in the insane rage to multiply objects of worship, Athens had in it "an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." The Greek satirist Lucian, himself a heathen, has said—"If you go to Egypt, you will find Jupiter with the face of a ram, Mercury as a dog, Pan a goat. The Ibis is a god, so is the crocodile, so is the ape. Shaven priests tell us that the gods in a panic of terror, when the giants rebelled, assumed those shapes." The priests of such divinities were guardians of pollution, and their rites consisted of the basest sensuality. Alluding to their religious mysteries, the apostle says "it is a shame even to speak

of those things which are done of them in secret." Deeds which language shrinks from describing were done as acts of worship. "God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Yet Gibbon the historian speaks of the rites of paganism as "innocent mysteries." Their ideas of morality were as loose and debasing as their notions of religion. Immortality also was unknown,—it was sometimes hoped for, seldom believed in. But of its nature they knew nothing. Their Elysium might be a scene of classic retirement, but it was "earthly, sensual, devilish;" the passions still raging in fury, the heart still filled with unholy inclinations, and the life still polluted by base and bestial pursuits. Nor is the heathen world of the present day improved. Idolatry is as rife, ignorance is as dense, worship is as degrading as in the ancient times. The priest and his god, the altar and its victim, the temple and its service, are as bloody and impure on the banks of the Ganges, the isles of the Pacific, and the continent of Africa, as they were on the fields of the Tiber, the valley of the Nile, or the mountains of Scandinavia. The experience of eighteen centuries has not benefited modern heathenism. Philosophy cannot teach it, poetry cannot charm it, science cannot improve it. It still remains, "having no hope and without God." The names of Socrates

and Plato, Cicero and Cato, were but feeble stars in the surrounding gloom. Man of himself cannot arrive at the knowledge of God, or come back to favour and peace. God must teach, and change him. A book of divine instruction, such as the Bible, is necessary. The light of nature fails to bring man to a Saviour, the leadings of Providence are unseen and contemned. A special revelation from heaven is requisite. And in it God stoops to man in order to raise us to Himself and to happiness. As has been remarked by a master in theology,—“the aged, or those whose sight is defective, when any book, however fair, is set before them, though they perceive something written, cannot yet make out two words in succession, still when aided by glasses, they can read distinctly, so scripture gathering together impressions of Deity which lay confused, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly.”* And my young friends, your own country was no better than other nations. Your ancestors were poor benighted pagans. The Druid shrouded in bloody mystery reigned over Scotland, and Mars had a temple in ancient Caledonia. On the spot occupied by St Paul’s in London stood a shrine of Diana, and the fane of Apollo covered the

* Calvin.

field now adorned by Westminster Abbey. We needed a revelation, light from heaven could alone dispel the gloom. An experiment made upon our world for six thousand years confirms the assertion that if God had not sought us, we had never sought him. But "God is love." His heart yearned over us. He pitied us. Judgment was stayed. His thunder was arrested. The throne of the universe became a throne of grace. Angels who had sinned were passed by, and fallen man became the object of divine favour, favour which he neither merited nor anticipated. Yes, God has given us the Bible,—an invitation to mercy, not a summons to judgment. Now the following are only some of the evidences by which we are persuaded that the Bible is His word.

I. The first class of proofs, I refer to, is usually named external evidence, and is composed of two kinds of divine works,—miracles and prophecy. These evidences are named external, because they refer not to the nature of Scripture, but to the SEAL set upon it by God. The Bible is like a letter, and these are God's own seal or mark accompanying it.

1. A miracle is a work beyond man's power to perform. He who performs it does so by the assistance of God. If God give his power to a man, it

must be for some great and extraordinary reason. Such a reason is our salvation; and the men who proclaimed it to our race were furnished with God's power to work miracles, in order to convince the world that they were speaking truth. The working of a miracle proves that the man who performed it is God's messenger, and speaks God's truth; for God WORKS BY HIM, and would not so lend his power to an impostor. Jesus wrought such miracles with surprising frequency, a frequency which instead of impairing, only increased their splendour. What else could be expected from God in human form? Christ's apostles imitated his example. These miracles were not only proofs of divine power, but also examples of divine goodness. The dead were raised—the deaf, blind, and lame, were cured. With what artless simplicity are these miracles of our Lord and his apostles narrated! How very different too are the miracles recorded in scripture from the startling prodigies which paganism claimed, or the silly and grotesque tricks which impostors have performed. Christ's miracles were not only done in public, were not only clearly above the reach of man to perform, but were of eminent utility. There was in them no idle display of power. Man was benefited, though a

tree might be blasted. What good had Rome, though the earth might yawn in the Forum, or a thunder storm should strike her Capitol? What profit had spectators, though Simon Magus had actually, as alleged, made dogs of brass that barked, or statues of stone that talked, or had flown himself through the air, or put on the shape of a serpent, or the appearance of a goat? But Christ's miracles gave food to the hungry, health to the diseased, peace to the insane, life to the dead; and his appeal is, "believe me for the very works' sake." Nicodemus spoke the truth when he said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." What therefore the Lord and his apostles have said to us, is truth,—divine truth, and we must believe it. Peter describes in the following words, the nature of this kind of evidence, Acts ii. 22, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, wonders, and signs;" "by miracles," or rather by works of power, actions which God only could perform,—by "wonders," actions which attract attention and cause great astonishment,—by "signs," actions which are the signal of God's presence, in attestation of his own truth. Those three words

describe to you the source, nature, effect, and purpose of miracles.

2. Prophecy is the making known, before it take place, of an event which no human wisdom could foresee, no human ingenuity bring about. The Bible is full of such predictions. Noah foretold the slavery of the race of Ham. Moses predicted the present dispersion and degradation of the Jews. Isaiah, with clear and graphic minuteness, "testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Daniel described the four great monarchies that succeeded one another before Christianity appeared; and our Lord forewarned the Jews of the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem. Many of these prophecies were delivered hundreds of years ere the events happened, and when the fulfilment of them must have appeared very unlikely, and could not have been a matter of man's calculation. Babylon was in her glory when Isaiah foredoomed her to utter desolation. Tyre was the "mart of nations," when Ezekiel affirmed, that soon she should be but a bare rock, on which a few poor fishermen might be seen drying their nets. The Jewish nation longed ardently for a Messiah, and yet it was predicted that they should put him to death. All these prophecies have been singularly

fulfilled, not one word has fallen to the ground. The event predicted might appear very improbable, and many years might elapse without a fulfilment of the oracle, yet at length in God's own time and way has it come to pass. Now prophecy is just a miracle in words, and the fulfilment of it is a standing monument. Only God can enable a man so to prophesy, and only God in his mysterious providence can bring such predictions to pass. The prophet is God's ambassador, and we are bound to listen to all his statements, for God **SPEAKS BY HIM**, and would not impart a portion of his own Omniscience to a deceiver. And so the prophet Isaiah sublimely describes the character and design of this species of proof in opposition to the false oracles which circulated among deluded pagan nations, xli. 21, "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."

II. The second class of proofs is generally called internal evidence; that is, it relates not to the seal of

the letter, but to its contents. The Bible bears proof in itself that it has come from God. It carries upon it evidence of its own parentage. All within it is god-like; its doctrines, its prophecies, its histories. It breathes the atmosphere of heaven.

Now, first, we have proof that the various books of scripture were written by the persons whose names they bear, and are not forged; that they contain no statement at variance with truth, and are not fictitious; and that they have not been falsified or corrupted in their progress down to us through so many centuries. The method of proving such truths, though it be related to history, has no connexion with what Papists call the traditions of the Church. Thus the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity, of Scripture, enable us to believe it,—are essential to its credibility. A long array of testimony demonstrates this truth. As to the genuineness of the books of Scripture, or the proof that they were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, we have sometimes the evidence of contemporaries, or at least that of the people among whom the productions first circulated. They had the best means of judging. In a case of such importance, they would use every means to satisfy themselves, and we may safely rest in their decision.

The churches to whom Paul sent letters had every evidence that he was their author, and only from this conviction could they receive such epistles. Then with regard to the authenticity of Scripture, or the proof that it does not contain fiction, appeal is sometimes made to pagan authors, who corroborate the record, and sometimes to the fact that the book containing such statements passed as true among the people who were witnesses of the facts. Thousands who witnessed our Lord's miracles were alive when the gospels containing the account of them were first published, and they did not deny the truth of the evangelical history. They could not, or they would. Paul appeals to the experience of the Corinthian church, when he describes the nature and varieties of spiritual gifts. Moses, too, in telling the great wonders of Jehovah, says to the people for whom he wrote the Pentateuch, "I speak not with your children which have not known,—but your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did.—The Lord hath not made this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day." What impostor could have hazarded such a statement? And the integrity of the Bible is no less powerfully defended. It has come down to us as God gave it.

There are minor variances, but no essential differences. The Jews had a superstitious reverence for the words, letters, and points of Scripture, and even counted them to secure against error in the course of transcription. They tell us for example that the first letter of their alphabet occurs in the Bible 42,377 times, and the second letter 38,218 times. Christians too loved the New Testament, and each sect jealously watched every other, lest any should corrupt the sacred oracles. The number of translations made at different periods also secured the unchanged fidelity of the original. We have thus pure Scripture. Truly "the words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

The unity of Scripture is a very wonderful thing. The Bible is not the production of one author but of many; not of one age but of many; not of one country but of many. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 in the new, and probably forty different authors were employed in their composition. These authors did not live in one country; Moses wrote in the Arabian desert, and John in the Isle of Patmos; Paul in the dungeons of Rome, and Daniel in the palace of Shushan. Some of these authors were

learned, others were illiterate ; some were poets, others historians ; some were in high stations as David the king ; some in a low condition, as Amos the herdsman, and Peter the fisherman. Neither did these forty authors live in one age. Two thousand years elapsed from the publication of Genesis to that of Revelation. Moses was many hundred years before Solomon, and Isaiah several centuries before Matthew. The Bible is thus a collection of inspired tracts or treatises written by about forty different men in several countries and at various intervals, during a period of about 2000 years. Yet it is one book, containing one great truth. It has no contradictions. A spirit of living unity pervades its pages. There are many members, very unlike in form and function, but these form one body, and there is only one soul within it. Just as in a harp there are many chords, and each is struck only in its turn, and yet thrilling harmony is the effect ; so the various writers of the Bible, each having his own style and subject, his own place and age, are yet one in truth and glory. The reason is, that the one Spirit dwelt in them all, as the spirit of inspiration. The thoughts which they uttered are his, the words which they employed are his also. So the collection of their treatises is named the *word* of God.

Moreover, the doctrines taught in the Bible concerning God, and man, and eternity,—so wonderful, so elevated, and so comprehensive; and the morality enforced in it—so pure and perfect, are other internal proofs. Yes, the religion of the Bible must be of God. It is not of earth. To no possible human source can you trace it. It is too profound to be ascribed to ignorance, too consistent to be deemed imposture, too rational to be branded as enthusiasm, and too pure to have had its origin in the bosom of fallen humanity.

The sublimity of its style corresponds, too, with the loftiness of its truths. The language rises without effort, and falls without puerility. It is always suited to its subject. The thoughts and diction never present an awkward or cumbrous disparity. Its prose is ever transparent, while its poetry breathes the spicy gales, and exhibits the sunny hues, of the Eastern world. The Bible is also an original book. It borrows nothing, but every system has filched from it. It has no rival, and it had no predecessor. Its birth-place is the mind and heart of God. Mohammed stole his Koran from it, and has not disguised the theft. What is new in that absurd book is not true, and what is true is not new. Thus the contents of Scripture prove its heavenly

origin ;—they are of God, and speak of God, and so have been stamped with his own signet.

And what a history the Bible has had ! It condemns every man ; and every man naturally is against it. Yet in the midst of universal and mutual hostility it has been preserved, while myriads of books by far its juniors have perished. Perhaps the following estimate is not far from the truth,—that of 1000 books published annually in this country, 660 are forgotten within the year, another 150 within three years, not more than fifty survive seven years, and scarcely ten are thought of after twenty years. Of the 50,000 books published in the seventeenth century, not more than fifty are now in estimation ; and of the 80,000 books published in the eighteenth century, not more than 300 are considered worth reprinting, and not more than 500 are in high repute. Since the earliest periods, not more than 500 authors of all nations have survived the lapse of ages. As Sir Thomas Browne says, the works of men have “ a stint and period to their duration, but the Bible is too hard for the teeth of time. It cannot perish but in the general flames, when all things shall confess their ashes.” “ The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away ; but the word of the Lord endureth for

ever." Its divine author has taken care of it. "It shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

And what effects it has produced! Wherever it has been received, it has changed the character of men and nations, of manners and institutions. In the hands of Williams and Moffat, it resembled the wonder-working rod of Moses. Savagism disappears, industry succeeds sloth, order supplants confusion, and the image of God is imprinted on the heir of hell. Read what modern missionaries have done. Sanguinary chiefs like Africaner become gentle as lambs. Old warriors acquire the softness and sympathy of women. The mother who had killed one half her offspring, now fondles her babes, and the children "are borne on her sides and dandled upon her knees." "The desert rejoices and blossoms like the rose." No book but the Bible can accomplish such changes. And there is no doubt that if the Bible were universally believed, the character of the world would be entirely altered;—

See all things now at last renewed,
And Paradise restored.

It displays the power and goodness of its author, and rejoices like him in producing a "new creation."

“Thy testimonies are wonderful.” Their matter and manner are equally evidence of their divinity. The prophet Jeremiah, reflecting on this kind of proof in contrast with the fables of imposture, says, “What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” xxiii. 28.

III. There is yet another kind of proof, which may be termed experimental evidence,—that conviction of the truth of scripture which the experience of believers creates within them. For example, they who believe in Christ are pardoned. This forgiveness produces peace; and the possession of such peace,—“peace that passeth all understanding,” becomes evidence of the divine power and origin of the Bible. Growth in holiness and hope, increasing likeness to God, are also similar proofs;—the same kind of proof which the blind man had, when he said, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see.” The man who has felt a shock of electricity, has the proof of experience that this agent of nature is sudden and powerful in its operation. So he who believes the Bible has within him a growing persuasion that the “word of God is quick and powerful.” O how many

have felt the blissful effect of faith in the Bible. When the arms of France had laid Europe prostrate, and the invader was collecting his forces upon the frontiers of Russia, the hearts of the inhabitants failed them for fear. The king's "heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." One man alone, of high rank and station, remained unmoved in the universal alarm. The prince Galitzin possessed his soul in patience, and was not "afraid of evil tidings." His tranquillity was noticed by all, and suspected by some. The emperor Alexander was amazed at it, for it was neither the result of want of feeling, nor absence of patriotism; and at length during an interview which the prince had solicited, he demanded to know the secret of his self-possession. The prince with great composure drew from his pocket a small Bible. It fell in being handed to the Emperor, but opened up at the 91st Psalm,—“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “Oh, that your Majesty,” responded the prince, on reading those words, “would seek this retreat.” Did not this tranquillity verify the promise, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on thee.” Instances innumerable

of the same kind have often occurred. During scenes of sudden danger, under the agony of protracted suffering, and amidst the horrors of immediate death, faith in the Bible has imparted courage and joy—a lesson still to us, “that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

“Devotion borrows music's tone,
And music takes devotion's wing,
And like the bird that hails the sun,
They soar to heaven, and soaring sing.”

It is, besides, the glory of this kind of evidence, that it is open to all, and needs neither learning nor logic that its mastery may be felt. It is also a species of reasoning that cannot be overturned; for you cannot argue a man out of his own consciousness. He does not merely know that the Bible is true, but he feels it. Such proof is enough for thousands—is all they possess:—

“She knows, and knows no more—her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
And in that treasure reads, with sparkling eyes,
Her title clear to mansions in the skies.”

The apostle John seems to refer to this third species of proof, when he says, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” Thus the

proofs that the Bible is of God, are numerous, varied, and conclusive.

How, it may be asked at this point, how has God given us the Bible? In what way has he communicated to us divine truth? He has not given a special revelation to every man, but only to a chosen few. The process by which he gave us the knowledge of his will is usually called inspiration, and it is expressed by various figures in Scripture. The inspired person received information from God, and imparted it to men. Now if any of his own thoughts were allowed to mingle with the oracle he delivered, it was soiled in its purity, and robbed of its authority. How, in such a case, could we distinguish between what is his own, and what is God's? and if we could not make such a distinction, then our faith and submission must be weakened if not destroyed. Inspiration, therefore, must be full or plenary. The message must come to us as wholly God's, without any human admixture. It is human in its vehicle, but all divine in its nature and substance. Then, again, as the prophet or apostle must communicate to men divine truth as fully and as clearly as he received it from God, as he must give it out to us as correctly as it was given in to him, inspiration must be verbal;—the inspired man must be infallibly guided in his

selection of words. Were he left to choose his own words, he might fail to tell us precisely the truths which God had told to him. But, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Bible does not consist only of God's ideas, but also of God's words. Can we suppose that God would allow his own thoughts to be injured in beauty or power by unsuitable language? "His word," says the dying psalmist, "was in my mouth." "Thus shalt thou speak unto the children of Israel," was the charge to Moses. "Thus saith the Lord," is a common affirmation. "It is written," is another mode of declaring that language as well as ideas, have been God's special gift to men in the oracles of truth. Words and thoughts are so closely associated that we cannot think but in words. To give us thoughts is also to give us certain words; for in words they are conveyed. Thus "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Inspiration belongs to every part of Scripture, relates to words as well as thoughts, and is quite compatible with any difference of style exhibited by the sacred writers, and with any various readings which the industry of critics has collected.

We have virtually anticipated another question, what productions have been so given by God? What books are

inspired? We answer, those contained in the Bible, or in the books named the Old and New Testaments. These form the canon, or rule, of Scripture. The New Testament vouches for the authority of the Old. Christ and his apostles quoted the Old Testament as "the Scripture"—"the word of God," and set upon it the seal of their authority. The early church defined the bounds of the New Testament. The simple question before them was, is this treatise or epistle the work of an apostle? And they were very cautious in such procedure. It is true that the gospels of Mark and Luke are not the productions of apostles, but they had apostolic sanction; the first had the authority of Peter, and the second of Paul; and so ratified they enjoyed the universal confidence of all the churches. We reject therefore the Apocrypha of the Old Testament, having in it such books as Tobit and Esdras; and the Apocrypha of the New Testament, comprising such productions as the gospel of the Infancy, the martyrdom of Thecla, and the Acts of Paul.

And my young friends, it is "the Bible and the Bible alone," which you are invited to believe. It is perfect—it needs no supplement, such as tradition. It is a sufficient rule of faith and manners. You are

not to receive as "doctrines the commandments of men." No opinion which is not found in Scripture can have authority. Though good men might hold it, men living near to the Apostles—still they are not our guides or masters. God has given his own book for our instruction, "Add not thou unto his words, lest thou be found a liar."

I might have referred you to many other points of evidence in behalf of the Bible—to the resurrection of Christ, the character and sufferings of the Apostles, the present state of the Jews, and the rapid triumph of the new faith in the early centuries. The character of Jesus as portrayed in the gospels, is a signal evidence itself. Such a character is so remote from what the world had seen, that the very idea of it proves inspiration. Rousseau, the French infidel, said justly, "if the life and death of Socrates are those of a philosopher, the life and death of Jesus Christ are those of a god."

I only add, that the attempts of infidelity have been as vain as they have been numerous and malignant. Unbelievers have tried every possible method to disprove the truth of the Bible, but each has, "like a devilish engine, recoiled back upon themselves." They have appealed to all the sciences, to geology,—astronomy, —history, and cried in reference to the books of Scrip-

ture, "Come, curse me them from thence." But the uniform answer has been, "How shall I curse whom the Lord hath not cursed?" Again they have tried to find out contradictions in Scripture, but have been equally worsted. Seeming discrepancies are proofs of a deep and genuine harmony. The great enemies of the Bible are a proud mind and a bad heart. One who had studied the nature of such "oppositions of science, falsely so-called," says of them—that they are made up of "a captious temper, an irreligious spirit, a moderate command of words, and an extraordinary degree of vanity and presumption."* Frederick II. of Prussia, who patronised Voltaire, was yet forced to say of him, "you have a heart a hundred times more horrible than your genius is beautiful." Sir Isaac Newton was wont to say to a man of science, who was an infidel, "Dr Halley, I am glad to hear you speak about astronomy or mathematics, for you have studied and you understand them, but you should not talk of christianity, FOR YOU HAVE NOT STUDIED IT." And even though the evidence for the divinity of Scripture were not so conclusive, though it were a matter only of probability, still the believer is happier and more rational than a doubter. When a pious and benevo-

* Dr Beattie of Aberdeen, in his "Immutability of Truth."

lent gentleman had sent to Lord Byron a copy of a prayer, which a religious lady was in the habit of presenting for him, his Lordship replied, " indisputably the firm believers in the gospel have a great advantage over all others, for this simple reason, they will have their reward hereafter ; and if there be no hereafter, they can but be with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having at the same time enjoyed an exalted hope through life."

For these, and many similar reasons, you, my young friends, feel no hesitation in believing the Bible. Without faith in it, the Bible can bring you no spiritual benefit. It is not enough to read and understand it. Many do so ; and yet, having no faith in it, are still under death. Let me hope that you are not among this melancholy number, but that each of you is prepared to say, " Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief." If you do not examine such proofs as I have laid before you, your indifference is very criminal, and your consequent unbelief is impious and ruinous. O, not to believe God,—the God of truth ! not to trust in God—the God of goodness ! For a child not to credit its parents, even though it may not comprehend the grounds of its confidence, is awfully perverse and wicked indeed. For one of

God's creatures not to believe on him, or to suspect his veracity, is the highest act of malignant and unnatural hostility. They believe God in heaven, and rejoice; they believe him in hell, and tremble. Only on earth is a sin committed, which has no place in the hearts of fiends and lost men;—only on earth, where faith saves, is faith wanting. Be not then, I conjure you, among the faithless,—among those who treat God's book as a lie, and “make him a liar.” Your Redeemer was himself amazed at men not taking him at his word,—“and he marvelled because of their unbelief.” Mere want of faith is as bad as open infidelity. The unbelief of carelessness is just as bad as the unbelief of profligacy. To lay the Bible aside is as fatal as to mock it,—to live as if there were no Bible, is as pernicious as to call it “cunningly devised fables.” God has spoken to you by prophets, by apostles, and by his own Son. Will you not, then, give implicit credit to all that he has said? Doubt not, delay not, question not. Believe without reserve—without hesitation. Remember Abraham's faith, how it neither paused, nor asked a reason. The voice came at midnight,—Offer thy Son; and he arose EARLY in the morning to obey the divine command.

Belief in the Word of God, when more special in its view, is called faith in Christ; for "to Him gave all the prophets witness," and the apostles preached his truth. The Bible was written to exhibit Jesus—the Saviour. To bring men to trust in the Son of God as Redeemer, is the one design of all the instruction which composes, and of all the evidence which encircles, the Book of Life. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This "precious faith," this "faith of God's elect," is the only means by which you are forgiven and accepted, adopted and sanctified,—fitted to live, prepared to die, and ripened for heaven. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." Refresh, then, the hearts of your "pastors and teachers," by enabling them to behold the "steadfastness of your faith in Christ." O, believe and live. Let your faith work by love, and be the parent of hope within you. "Walk by faith." "Live by the faith of the Son of God," and you will die in serenity and triumph—pillowing your drooping heads on the bosom of Immanuel.

In one word, and to adopt the language of one of the deepest thinkers of the age, "If these scriptures, impregnable in their strength, sustained in their pre-

tensions by innumerable miracles and prophecies, and by the experience of the inner man in all ages, as well as by a concatenation of arguments, all bearing upon one point, and extending with miraculous consistency through a series of fifteen hundred years ; if all this combined proof does not establish their validity, nothing can be proved under the sun ; but the world and man must be abandoned, with all its consequences, to one universal scepticism."* Yes—

“ Within this awful volume lies,
The mystery of mysteries ;
Happiest they of human race,
To whom their God has granted grace,
To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
To lift the latch and force the way ;
And better had they ne'er been born,
Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.”

* Coleridge.



Remember the Bible.

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YOU have not, my young friends, I am sure, forgotten that our next topic was originally announced in these words, **REMEMBER THE BIBLE.**

The gift of memory is an original endowment from him who is "the Father of spirits." Without it there could be no improvement,—the past would be a dreary and miserable blank. But God has not confined you to the present moment, he has given you a faculty by which you can bring back former thoughts and feelings,—by which you can place again before your mind what you have read, and what you have heard, and make it the subject of profitable reflection. The power of memory may indeed vary in different persons. Some have a memory so susceptible, so easy and swift in immediate recollection, that it can, without pain or difficulty, charge itself with all

that passes before its observation either in nature or in books. Others have a memory distinguished by its tenacity. It may commit with agony and long and anxious toil, but it never forgets; its very labour gives its marvellous power. Others again have a ready memory, which at once turns up what is sought after, and without an effort or a struggle, supplies the mind with all that is wanted to prove, illustrate, or adorn the topic of its study or meditation. Rarely, indeed, in one individual, may all those properties of a good memory be combined; some one of them may possess a peculiar prominence.

But the power of memory, whatever be its distinguishing quality, is never better employed than in occupying itself with the word of God. It is not sufficient to read the Bible, we must remember its contents. The memory cannot treasure up any thing of such interest and value as saving truth. No duty is more plainly incumbent on you, than to keep in memory that Bible which you have read, understood, and believed. For,

I. The Bible is given you in a form to be remembered. It is so composed, as to be easily recollected. Its varieties of style, its bold and beautiful figures, its brief and pithy sayings, its simple and affecting

parables, its touching and impressive biographies, are all designed to enable you to bear upon your memories the book of God. It is also so small in size, that it may be easily retained. The literary beauties of Scripture are evidently meant to assist the memory. Had the Bible been all composed in one style, it could not have been so easily remembered. Its diversity gives it a peculiar hold upon the mind, and you are charmed by a pleasing succession of domestic scenes and personal adventures, familiar epistles and solemn expositions, songs and morals, history and prophecy, military annals and devotional poetry. God has given you the same variety in nature. Objects of vision might have been all of uniform colour, and sounds of monotonous equality; and yet, the purposes both of sight and hearing, might have been attained. But, O what a destitution of pleasurable sensation, from the want of those varied hues which refresh the eye, and those rich harmonies which gratify the ear. Similar adaptation to the mind you have also in the Bible. You have it in the varied aspect in which divine truth is presented—by Paul, the teacher of faith; by John, the disciple of love; and by Peter, the apostle of hope. You have it also in the gospels—which contain the life

of the same individual. Matthew groups and classifies the various events of our Lord's career, to convince the Jews, that the Son of Mary was the promised Messiah—the fulfilment of old prophecy. Mark confines his gospel to the actions of Him “who went about doing good,” the deeds of the kind and untiring wonder-worker. The biography of Luke breathes a Catholic Spirit; and exhibits Jesus, not as the Messiah of the Jews, but the Saviour-God of the world. In the composition of the beloved disciple, Christ appears in the mellowed radiance of a brother and friend—the incarnation of truth, and love, and sympathy. Such agreeable variety, while it serves other purposes, attracts the mind, and assists the memory. How different is the Koran of Mohammed. “Under his shrill monotonous tone, your ears tingle. From the first word to the last, it is the unvarying note of the same trumpet; it is ever the cornet of Medina, sounding from the top of mosque, minaret, or caparisoned camel—always the same rude forbidding voice, without feeling, familiarity, tears, soul, or sympathy.”* How evident, then, that God designed his word to be remembered. Is it not one peculiar work of his Spirit to bring “all things

* Gausson of Geneva, in his Theopneustia.

to your remembrance?" Is not the exercise of a sanctified memory closely connected with your salvation? for the apostle says, "by the which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." Nay, the Psalmist associates the conversion of the world with the previous excitement of this mental power—"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord."

II. Reflect on the advantages of remembering the Bible. No one of you will be disposed to question the profit of recollecting such words of truth, mercy, and power, as are to be found in Scripture. If you forget them, what rule will be your guide, and where will you find a foundation for hope and comfort? You may almost as well have no Bible at all, if, on every occasion when you have shut it, you allow its truths to "slip." But if you have retained its sayings in your memory, the effect on yourselves will be of continued and incalculable good. You may come into scenes of temptation; and then, if you do not "remember the words of the Lord Jesus," you are utterly helpless. The Bible may not be within your reach. To consult its pages may be impossible. But O, if your memory be well stored with divine truth, its direc-

tions will guide you, its promises will cheer you, and faith in it will give you the victory.

We propose to you as an example of an active and sanctified memory the Redeemer Himself. You know how Satan tempted him in the wilderness. Jesus did not pause to argue or remonstrate. He only quoted Scripture, and he quoted from memory. Once and again, and a third time, was he assaulted, and as often was the tempter defeated by Christ's recollection and use of powerful passages from the Bible. His memory supplied him with those weapons which baffled and put to flight his dark antagonist. Now, it is a remarkable fact, that all our Lord's citations at this period of trial are taken from one book of the Old Testament,—the book of Deuteronomy. That treatise is an abridgment of the preceding books,—and contains a brief rehearsal of early Jewish history. On this account it must have been a favourite book with the Hebrew youths, one in which they took a deep and constant interest, and which they must have read so eagerly as to remember its leading incidents, its most prominent truths, its most striking lessons. The "child Jesus" may have been early directed to the reading and recollection of this book by his mother. It fed his opening mind

and stored his youthful memory ; and from such juvenile lessons was he furnished with those quotations, at the recital of which the devil fled abashed. Never lay aside "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Be ye followers of Christ.

And if, in future years, you should be afflicted and bowed down by disease—your eyes dim,—your arm feeble, and your power of attention weak and fickle—of what value to you will not the memory of Scripture be? Its promises will then come up to your heart in refreshing number and variety. You will be satisfied from yourselves, and your memory so happily occupied in pouring out its consolations, will be within you "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Happy is he who possesses such a treasure. Youth is the season to acquire it, age is the period to enjoy its sweets.

But, in short, at all times the remembrance of Scripture will be your best companion. The command given by Solomon, exhorting you to early and immediate piety, refers itself chiefly to your memory,—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” The sacred injunction to keep the Sabbath throws itself on your memory in similar terms — “Remember the Sabbath-day.”

When the Psalmist was perplexed by some mysterious events of Providence, he found comfort in the exercise of memory—"I call to remembrance my song in the night." "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; I will remember the works of the Lord." Such years are described, and such works recorded in the Bible. The celebration of the Lord's Supper appeals also to the memory of the friends of Christ,—“Do this in remembrance of me,”—of ME, whose life, actions, sufferings, and death are narrated in the New Testament. And so the remembrance of appropriate portions of Scripture will cherish and strengthen your Christian graces. If any doubts creep over your mind, they will be banished by a recollection of the promises of the covenant,—“This,” says the prophet, “I recall to mind, therefore I have hope.” Should you “be overtaken in a fault,” and not confess your sin and mourn over it, memory will summon you to repentance,—“And Peter remembered the words of Jesus,—and he went out, and wept bitterly.” Let me intreat you, then, to consider these statements. Implore God so to strengthen and sanctify your memory, as to enable you to bear upon it the truths, precepts, hopes, promises, and examples of his blessed Book.

III. Take advantage, my young friends, of all possible and likely means of enabling you to remember the Bible. Memory is to be improved by exercise. Many persons complain of a bad memory, when the fault is their own, their own want of attention or neglect of discipline. And there is great sin in so doing. It is casting blame on that God who has given them all their powers of mind. It is saying, like our first parents,—the memory thou gavest me, it beguiled me. It is of great importance then for you to know how your memory may best discharge its duty in reference to the inspired volume. The following hints, founded on general experience, may be of some little service to you.

1. In order to remember the Bible, read it with frequency; read it with earnest attention. If you read any book seldom, or glance over its pages very carelessly, you cannot remember it. But if you read the Bible often, you become familiar with it, and you lodge it in your memory. The more attention you bestow upon it, the more easily will you retain it. Whatever strikes you, or closely exercises either your senses or your mind, is kept in remembrance without any trouble. A drop of water will pierce through the hardest rock, not by the violence,

but by the frequency of its descent. So the worst memory, if often exercised, will in course of time remember the Bible. Be incited to this blessed work by the recorded efforts of many students of Scripture, and by the success which attended their labours. The Emperor Theodosius, amidst all the cares of government, wrote out the entire New Testament with his own hand. The King Alphonsus, read the Bible fourteen times over — no slight task in his days. Bonaventura transcribed the whole Bible; Zuinglius wrote out for himself the Epistles of Paul. These men adopted such plans of assisting their memory, and to a very great extent they succeeded. Cromwell, the Earl of Essex, had by heart all the New Testament. Beza, the Reformer, when he was very young, had committed to memory the Epistles of Paul; and in old age, when recollection failed him as to every thing else, he found no difficulty in remembering these portions of Scripture. In the first ages of the church, children had often parts of the Bible hung round their necks; and were enabled by cherishing familiarity with Scripture, to keep it in remembrance. Bibles were scarce in those periods, and many could only remember the Word of God by hearing it frequently read in their presence by others.

2. In order to remember the Bible, love it. Nothing helps memory like affection. It enables you to recall the faces of absent persons and the scenes of distant years, when nothing else can help you. When you listen to the words of one you love, you feel them for a long time vibrating in your ear; and in the language of the wise man, "you keep them in the midst of your heart." So if you love the Bible, with the Saviour whom it reveals, you will have no difficulty in remembering it. If you love it, you will find yourselves, ere you are aware, employing the best helps for your memory; for you will be thinking of it "when you sit in the house, and walk by the way," and you will "bind it as a sign upon your hand, and it shall be as frontlets between your eyes." O then, love the Word of God (it is "altogether lovely"), and you thus will possess the best and easiest method of remembering it.

At the same time, let it not be merely for its literary qualities that you love the Bible. These alone sometimes give it a hold on the memory of painters, poets, and historians. When Raffaele and Angelo, Rembrandt or Poussin, painted sacred scenes, or when Racine or Klopstock sung of some hero already consecrated in the Bible, their fancy chiefly

was exercised upon the Scripture. God's Book, as we have said, has literary beauties of a high order, and these are not to be overlooked. It contains, as a competent judge wrote on the blank leaf of his Bible, "more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more pure morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever age or language they may have been written."* This superiority also "cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts." But the Bible is also robed in the "beauty of holiness." It is to be loved as a book of salvation, and for its power over the sinful heart. For while it is, as a literary work, so far above ordinary human production, it possesses, at the same time, an influence and a character peculiar to itself. Calvin truly says, "Read Demosthenes or Cicero, read Plato or Aristotle, or any other of that class; you will, I grant, feel wonderfully allured, pleased, moved, enchanted; but turn from them to the reading of the sacred volume, and whether you will or not, it will so affect you, so pierce your heart, so win its way into your very marrow, that, compared with the effect so produced, the sensation created by the perusal of poets and orators

* Sir William Jones.

will almost disappear. In the sacred volume, it is therefore clearly proved, that there is a truth divine, a something which renders it immeasurably superior to all the gifts and graces attainable by man." It is this majesty of the Spirit which you are to love and adore; and if such impressions be produced, they cannot be forgotten. They will always be like Bethel to Jacob—a scene which never faded in interest—"the place where he anointed the pillar and vowed the vow." When the Bible is so loved, as a book of saving truth—it will have its abode in the memory, its home in the heart. The holy martyrs of former times would not give it up to their enemies. Eusebius, a man of some note in the church, was urged by imperial authority to modify the words taught in Scripture; but his noble reply to the Emperor, who threatened him with the loss of his goods, with torment, exile, and death, was in those powerful sentences: I do not need to fear confiscation,—who have nothing to lose; nor banishment,—my only country is heaven; nor torments,—my body one blow will destroy; nor death,—my only release from sorrow, the only path to heaven. Had you such attachment to the Bible, because you felt its influence, you would be in no hazard of allowing its truths to fall into oblivion. It would

rise above all else in your mind, and, like Aaron's rod, would swallow up every competitor. Thinking on nature, you would yet be adoring grace; speaking of earth, your conversation would be in heaven. How beautifully does the great reformer of philosophy express the same experience,—“I have delighted in the brightness of thy temple. Thy creatures have been my books, but thy Scriptures much more; I have sought thee in the courts, fields, and gardens, but I have found thee in thy temples.”* Who that has felt these emotions, will ever cease to remember the Bible—

— “That Holy Book, on every line,
 Marked with the seal of high divinity;
 On every leaf bedew'd with drops of love
 Divine, and with the eternal heraldry,
 And signature of God Almighty stamp'd,
 From first to last?”

3. Be constantly exercising your remembrance of the Bible. Imagine yourselves placed in certain scenes, and then endeavour to feel with what ease or readiness you can recall the portions of Scripture best adapted to you. You have often in prayer to employ promises before God, and always see that you repeat them with accuracy. God has chosen the best words,

* Lord Bacon.

and do not therefore mix his words with your own. You cannot improve God's phrases by your slovenly additions. Honour God's word, not only by devoutly reading it, by clearly understanding it, and by cordially believing it, but also by correctly remembering it. Constant use will give you fluent accuracy, when in pleading the promises you humbly desire to "put Him in remembrance." I need scarcely guard you against the habit of misquoting the Bible. Does it not resemble the position of Uzzah, when he put forth his hand to guard the ark, which did not need such presumptuous help? The practice is too common, and as there are some clauses which are generally misquoted, losing thus their beauty and power, I shall present you with a few of them, placing in italics the words which are unauthorised additions. A *walk and a conversation* becoming the gospel. None can stay thy hand *from working*. The light of thy *reconciled* countenance. Who drinketh up iniquity as *the thirsty ox drinketh up* water. God *out of Christ* is a consuming fire. Look on *us in* the face of thine anointed. His tender mercies over all his *other* works. These additions marked in italics are unhallowed liberties taken with the word of God; some of them silly, some absurd, some erroneous, and

all of them weakening the sense and terseness of the original phrases.

Surely you will need no other inducements, my young friends, to remember the Bible. What else indeed is worth remembering? Forget the Bible—No. “An horror of great darkness” would settle down upon you. Forget the Bible—No. You cannot wish to lose connexion with Christ and happiness, or abandon the hope of a future being,—with eternity for your lifetime, and infinitude for your home. Forget the Bible—Never.*

“Yea, from the table of my memory,
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records;
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there.
And thy commandment all alone shall live,
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter.”

O, then, employ this precious faculty in such hallowed work, and do so with eager delight and spontaneous movement! Do not load it with trifles, or fill it with idle vanities. Let not your Saviour say to you in vain, “Do ye not understand, neither remember?” The call of Eternal Wisdom to the young is, **FORGET ME NOT.**

* Every Hebrew king was commanded to write out for himself a copy of the Divine Law, that he might always remember and obey it.

Practise the Bible.
.....

SUCH an admonition, my young friends, naturally follows our preceding lessons. It is the result of them all. If they issue not in this, they are useless indeed; they are clouds without rain. To read the Bible and yet disobey it—to understand it and yet rebel against it—to profess to believe it and yet to be living in wilful opposition to it—to remember it and yet neglect obedience to it — is a sin of great enormity, and of numerous and heinous aggravations. For what has God given you the Bible, but to govern your life? It enlightens your mind, but it also changes your heart, in order that your conduct may be swayed by its rules, in order that you may live as it bids you, think as it tells you, feel as it moves you, act as it prompts you, walk as it leads you, and die at length

in the comfort which it bestows. Faith leads to holiness, and pardon precedes and prepares for sanctification.

It is a woful delusion to suppose that the mere possession and knowledge of the Bible will save you. If you know what your parents' commands are, know them thoroughly, remember them correctly, and feel their authority strongly, then the more guilty are you, if you care not to obey them from sullen indifference, or do the very opposite of them in spiteful contumacy. They that know their master's will, and do it not, are to be "beaten with many stripes." Unless your minds be so changed, my young friends, that you love God's law, and, from this affection for it, rejoice in obeying it, you are not the servants of Christ, and you are not prepared for heaven. Good works, as they are called, cannot save you; indeed, there can be none till you believe; but good works will always show themselves in those who are the genuine disciples of Jesus. The heart is not a coffin, in which the truth of the Bible lies buried, but its cradle, where it is cherished, and whence it gathers life and power.

Heaven, again, is a world of holiness,—perfect holiness, and therefore its happiness is complete and eternal. But you must be prepared for its enjoyment.

Colours, no matter how bright or how delicate, cannot amuse the blind. Music of the richest harmony has no delights for the deaf. So heaven can yield no happiness to them who love sin. They would feel strange in heaven. They could not breathe its spirit; its light would dazzle them, and the melody of its praises would fill them with torment. They could not bear the sight of the Lamb, for they had despised him; they would not find fit companions in angels and saints, for "two cannot walk together except they be agreed." Holiness is the only preparation for heaven, and to grow in holiness is just to practise the Bible. So that heaven begins now, all its elements are now possessed and now enjoyed; and the more perfectly you practise the Bible, the nearer are you to that blessed world. Death will be to you only a removal, a translation, or a change of scene, not a change of pursuit or enjoyment. In heaven you will drink of the fountain, on earth you had only tasted of the stream.

And that change so requisite to the enjoyment of heaven, is the work of the Holy Ghost. His power alone can effect it. Yet the Bible is the great means he employs. Saints are "born again, . . . by the word of God." "Wherewithal shall a young man

cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." The Spirit of God uses Scripture to convert sinners, puts its "laws into their mind"—enables the mind to know them in their origin, nature, and power, and "writes them in their heart,"—fills the heart with such love for them that it finds its very life in cordial submission to their claims and authority. Thus, as Pascal truly says, good people "judge by the heart, as others do by the understanding." Such power to obey the Bible comes from the Bible itself, in the hands of the Spirit of truth. O, then, seek knowledge to understand, and grace to obey the commands of God! You cannot but reprobate the superstition and folly of former times, when so many tried to find out the future, or to know the will of God, by merely opening the Bible, and reading the first verse on which the eye should rest. God's will is known by earnest study. Yet it is adapted to the young, and the early opponent of our religion who wrote in the second century, makes it a peculiar objection to Christianity, that its truths were proclaimed "to women and children."*

Now the Bible is a clear and perfect rule of duty. Such a standard was indeed necessary. The specula-

* Celsus.

tions of men about virtue and moral obligation have been very vague and contradictory. We need not to go beyond our own country for examples. Hobbes placed the foundation of right and wrong solely in the law of the land. Bolingbroke resolved virtue into self-love. Shaftesbury thought virtue good, because it was fitting in the nature of things. Hume looked upon it in no higher light than a comely person or a pretty face, and did not see any reason why a man should blush for theft, more than for a squinting eye or a crooked back. Others have regarded virtue as mere decency, and have thought vice only odious when it was detected. The world needed a directory, simple in its maxims, and authoritative in its requirements. The Bible is an infallible rule of faith and manners. It is easily understood. The oracle never gives a doubtful response. Its statements are never enveloped in a deceitful haze. A man of great practical judgment has recently said, "If the sense of the Scriptures as to any important point may fairly be doubted by honest and sensible men, it seems to me to be no better than mockery to call them the rule of faith." * And this rule of duty must possess divine authority, so that it may bind men, and prevent

* The late Dr Arnold.

them from making any selection among its precepts. The Bible has such authority, even "the authority of God, the supreme Lord of all, the first and the absolute truth, whose word is truth, speaking in and by the penmen of the Scriptures." * God has, therefore, not "left himself without a witness." Let there be an "honest and good heart," and the commands of God will be clearly understood and cordially acknowledged.

Now the great law of the Bible is the law of love,—love to God and love to man,—"such love is the fulfilling of the law," or rather its fulfilment, as the original term denotes. Love is the whole obedience of the law, its entire complement of duty. Love to God is "the first and great commandment," "and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To practise the Bible is to cherish this generous feeling of love. The graces which "abide" to adorn the Christian heart, are "faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Charity means love; all graces unite in creating love, and at length disappear in love, as the flower is lost in the fruit. God is love, and the possession of love will give you a complete resemblance to Him; for he that "dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God." Nay more, the

outflowing of this feeling is the happiness of eternity, —“for love is heaven, and heaven is love.” But love shows itself in a variety of forms, and has therefore originated a variety of statutes. One portion of God’s word thus speaks of human duty: “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” The apostle again says, “The grace of God . . . teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” These are general descriptions of the great duties which the Bible enjoins you to practise. Thus the last quotation bids you live,

1. **SOBERLY.** This section of duty relates to yourselves; you are never to lose command of yourselves, but are at all times to keep yourselves under a wise restraint; you are never in your freest moments to resemble the horse without bridle, or the ship without helm. Beware of that levity which destroys self-respect, and of that self-will which must forfeit the esteem of others. You are to be sober in all things, not only in eating and drinking, in amusement or relaxation, but in mind and thought. Extravagance in dress, intemperance at table, time misspent in

giddy recreation, vain fancies cherished to excess, wild speculations foolishly indulged in—all these are trespasses, on the part of the young, against the great law of sobriety. Remember God's presence. Never let a sense of your awful responsibility escape you. Feel that every moment brings you nearer the judgment-seat, and that you know not the moment when you may be summoned to stand before it. On no occasion fall below the dignity of immortal creatures. You are made for eternity. Solemn thought! Once in existence, never to be out of existence. To live for ever! Ay, for ever. Listen to the quaint appeal of one of the most pointed and searching of christian moralists: "If man have no life to live but this, nor any further account to give, then he is but one of the higher sort of beasts, differing but gradually from a dog, as a dog doth from a swine. And if this indeed be thy judgment of thyself, I demand whether or no thou be content to be used as a beast? Wilt thou take it ill to be called or judged a beast by another? Or wouldst thou have others judge of thee better than thyself? Wouldst thou have no man regard thy prosperity or thy life, any more than a beast is regarded? A beast hath no property, no, not of that which nature hath given him. You accuse

not yourselves of doing him any wrong, when you deprive the sheep of his fleece, nor when you make a constant drudge of your horse or ox. And do you think it lawful before God, for any that can but master you, to do the like by you? To strip you naked, and make pack-horses of you, and use you as their slaves. Should nothing restrain them but want of power to overcome you?" * Remember, then, how far you are above the "beasts that perish." Let this feeling make you sober-minded. For if there be some "good thing" in your heart "toward the Lord God of Israel," your destiny is glorious, and your present youth will bear a peculiar lustre, since—

"Lilies spotless in their whiteness,
Fountains stainless in their brightness,
Suns in cloudless lustre sinking,
Fragrant flowers fresh breezes drinking,
Music swelling as we listen,
Dewdrops falling as they glisten,
All things pure, and bright, and fair,
With early saintship may compare."

2. **RIGHTEOUSLY.** You have fellow-creatures in the world, and this word describes your duty to them. You are in all things to act toward them in a spirit of truth, justice, and love. It is always wrong to go

* Richard Baxter.

aside, no matter how little, from the truth, or in any way to deceive or impose upon another. Little lies are great falsehoods. Deception, even for amusement, is not consistent with true honesty. Always, therefore, my young friends, speak and act as if your fellow-men saw into your heart. Be ye "the children of light." Abhor what is low and cunning; for it resembles the mean and malicious snake crawling to its prey. Do all things "in simplicity and godly sincerity." Remember the golden rule: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Never withhold from your brethren what is their due. Give them frankly all to which they are entitled. I refer not to the transactions of ordinary business merely, but to all that the "royal law" of love to your neighbour requires. It enacts far more than an equitable adjustment of pounds and pence; and commands you to be honest in every statement, and candid in every opinion; to be charitable in every judgment, and sincere in every advice; to praise your neighbour's merit without envy, forgive his offence without a grudge, and promote his general welfare with brotherly interest, and from spontaneous impulse. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." The great and common sins against this branch of

Christian morality are, malignity, falsehood, and ingratitude,—the three sins which reign in the heart of Satan,—and shed over hell the blackness of darkness. Shrink then, O start back, from such unrighteous feeling, and hearken for a moment to the sweet and tender strains of the minstrel :—

“ And from the prayer of want, and plaint of woe,
O never, never, turn away thine ear ;
Forlorn in this bleak wilderness below,
Ah ! what were man, should heaven refuse to hear ?
To others do, the law is not severe,
What to thyself thou wishest to be done ;
Forgive thy foes, and love thy parents dear,
And friends and native land, nor them alone,
All human weal and woe, learn thou to make thine own.”

Study also to act righteously toward the lower creation. They have rights as well as you. Surely you cannot cause them unnecessary pain or distress ; the meanest insect claims your regard. Do not “ call that man your friend, who can set his foot needlessly on a worm.” God did not think it beneath him to legislate for the ox and the ass.

At the same time, if you see any of your companions erring, you are to reprove them in a tone of kindness, and not to “ suffer sin upon them.” Be cautious, too, as to the friendships you form. Learn to say with

David, "Depart from me ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." Be often presenting the psalmist's prayer: "Rid me and deliver me from strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood; that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace."

3. **GODLY.** God made you—has preserved you in being, and sent his Son to redeem you from death. How great are the obligations under which you are laid to love and serve such a God! Will not his love in the gift of his Son so deeply move you, as to bring you to trust in him and to obey him? To live godly, however, is not on set times to engage in devotional exercises, to pray at certain periods, or devote a portion of the week to the study of Scripture. These things are its fruits indeed, but it implies far more. It is to cherish at all times a sense of your dependence on God for every blessing. It is to form every thought in the image of God, and to give every feeling a direction toward heaven. It is to speak every word in the fear of God, and do every act to the honour of his Name. It is, in short, ever to be conscious that spiritually, as well as physically, "in Him we live, and

move, and have our being” When God rules the mind and fills the heart, and is the centre round which turn our affections and hopes—when we live to him, as we live in him, and feel that he is to us a portion that satisfies every want, and a fountain pouring into our spirits the choicest blessings—when we long for his favour, and strive to partake of his likeness; then do we in some respect live “godly.” This happy feeling, my young friends, is fostered by prayer—by reading the scriptures, by attending the means of grace, and by soliciting and cherishing the influence of the Holy Ghost. It finds food every day, but it enjoys special luxury on the Sabbath. Its motto is, “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” O, form the highest ideas of his character, feel the deepest reverence for his perfections! Fear him without terror, love him without presumption. Obey him with gratitude, and trust in him with unwavering confidence. Praise him in joyous songs, pray to him in humble fervency. Seek his protection. Above all things desire his favour, for it is life. Ever ask his grace to be in you to sanctify you, and his power to be around you to defend you. Let the Son of his love be your Redeemer. Study his creation, learn from his providence,

live by his redemption. Let his bosom be your refuge, his law your rule, his glory your aim. Serve him now, and you shall enjoy him for ever and ever.—For ever with the Lord! Amen. So let it be.

I shall conclude, my young friends, with a few remarks, to which I invite your special attention. They refer to the manner in which the will of God, so revealed in the Bible, is to be practised.

1. ALL the will of God is to be done. Every portion of Scripture is of the same authority. It is very wrong to make a selection among the commands of God, to obey some and neglect others. Saul, the king, was guilty of this sin, and God rejected him. You must obey God in every thing; for “he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.” Indeed the whole Bible is eminently practical. Its very names show its adaptation to man. It is the Bible,*—the book, to be read; Scripture,—to be studied at leisure. It is God’s testimonies, to be credited; his law, to be obeyed; his judgments, to be submitted to; his precepts, to be done; his statutes, to be observed;

* “Bible” comes from a Greek word, signifying the kind of bark of which books were long ago made. Book is originally the same as beech, as formerly, in Denmark and other northern countries, books were formed of thin slices of the beech tree, rudely tied together.

his commandments, to be performed. "In the word of God are many deep and profound points of doctrine, as being the main original ground whereupon the precepts of duty depend; many prophecies, the clear performance of which might confirm the world in belief of things unseen; many histories, to serve as looking-glasses to behold the mercy and truth of God toward all that faithfully serve him; yea, many meditations of piety, to be as patterns and precedents in cases of like nature.* My earnest prayer for you is, that, having a complete form of God's law, "ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

2. ALL the will of God is to be done at ALL times. The Bible seeks uniform as well as universal obedience. There is no moment when you may throw off the authority of God. Never, I pray you, say in your heart, "God hath forgotten, he hideth his face, he will never see it." Never is any license granted to sin. O! beware of the temptation to act otherwise. Very many fall before it, and regret it all their lives. There can at no time be a fit opportunity to break the law of God. "I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me."

* Hooker.

3. The will of God is to be done cheerfully. Let no grudge be in your heart as if the precepts of the Bible were hard things. God cannot accept a sullen heart and gloomy face. He likes not the forced obedience of a slave, but the joyous looks and deeds of a child. His words are, "My son, give me thine heart"—thy whole heart—without condition, without reserve. God's will, if obeyed, leads to happiness. "His commandments are not grievous." "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." Let me hope, then, that every one I am addressing is prepared to say with the ELDER BROTHER, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Let every heart be filled with the thought, that the Lord loveth a cheerful doer as well as a "cheerful giver." "Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it." "If we did but get the authority of the great God (whose word this is) enthroned within us, so that our souls might stand in continual awe of him, the remembrance of a text of scripture would presently allay passion, govern appetite, and check inclination; and so would come, *with ease and pleasure*, to be to us a governing rule of all the affairs and actions of our lives."*

4. Do the will of God, because it is the will of

* Howe.

God. Let the Bible be practised, because it is the Bible. Obey, from a simple respect to God's authority. If there be, "thus saith the Lord," it is enough. Let no weak or little motive influence you. "Fear God, and keep his commandments." Let it be yours to say, "I delight to do thy will." Be not outdone by a man who was only a pagan and originally a slave. The following is his language, "Did I ever, Lord, accuse thee or complain of thy government? Was I not always willing to be sick, when it was thy pleasure that I should be so? Did I ever desire to be what thou wouldest not have me to be? Was I ever the less pleased on that account? Am I not always ready to do what thou commandest? Would thou have me continue here, I will freely do so? Wouldst thou have me depart? I go at thy summons."* Let your sentiment be always, "Thy will be done." You may not know the reasons or grounds of God's will; yet it becomes you to obey, in the assurance that He is too wise to err, too kind to injure.

5. In practising the Bible, pay special and prayerful attention to the bright example of Christ. He did God's will perfectly, and, in living and dying, he has left "us an example, that we should follow his

* Epictetus.

steps." The wisest of the old philosophers felt the need of some one to appear on earth, to show by his example to men what is their duty. Socrates is represented as saying to one of his most accomplished pupils, "It is necessary to wait till we can learn how to conduct ourselves to the gods and to men." The pupil naturally asks, "When, O Socrates! shall this time come, and who is to be the teacher? it would be delightful to see what kind of person he is." "It is he," replied Socrates, "that careth for thee, and he shall take away the mist from thy spirit, and make thee to know both good and evil." These vague longings of a great mind, are all satisfied in Christ. We are to be changed into his image. Every grace in his heart will have a corresponding grace in yours. Love to Him is now your great motive; it makes every duty pleasant, all service light.

And if you are his younger brethren, you will resemble the FIRST-BORN. He has shown you how to live as children, how to act as men, how to die as saints. His life is the great lesson from which to learn how to practise the Bible. Feel that your character is formed in your youth. Now adore and follow Christ's example. "Flee youthful lusts." Now lay the foundation of lasting moral greatness. "Even a

child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." Say not, "I am but a little child, I know not how to go out or come in;" but look up to God, trust in his love, and cry to him, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." O, "serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind." "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." And now, "if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Only in this way can true religion be perpetuated in the earth. "He commanded our Fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born—who should arise and declare them to their children—that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, **BUT KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.**" O, then, "perfect holiness in the fear of God." Rely on the might of his grace,—plead with the exalted Saviour to give you strength.

"Christ is arisen,
The Lord hath ascended,
The dominion of death
And corruption is ended.

Your work of obedience
Haste to begin,
Break from the bondage
Of Satan and sin."

Circulate the Bible.

SUCH are the words in which, my young friends, I bring before you my last topic of conversation. It is matter of great thankfulness, that the Bible is in a written or printed form, and that the will of God is not left to tradition, which must often have erred, or to memory, which must often have failed. How, if only handed down orally from one generation to another, could it have been easily or accurately given to other lands. But in its present form it can be translated into other languages. What has not the English translation done for the religion, the language, and the literature of this country? Each new translation has a similar effect in every country where it circulates. Pray, my young friends, for the coming of that time, when every nation shall have its Bible,

and shall rejoice to read in its own tongue, the "words of eternal life." For,

This blessed book is God's gift to mankind. It is not meant for any one nation, and no continent is to hold it in monopoly. Write upon your memories what the great poet of nature has sung—

"Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves; for if our virtues
Do not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd
But to fine issues."

Now, the Bible is a book of life to a dying world. God has not multiplied copies of it by a miracle, and showered them over the globe. Each prophet, or apostle, wrote his oracle or his letter, and left it to the care of the Church. The Church was to cherish such a treasure for itself, and then labour that other portions of the world might enjoy the same privilege. So it is your duty, after having read, understood, and believed the Bible, to strive that those who have it not, may soon possess it, and find through it the means of salvation. And,

1. Only those who love the Bible themselves will enter heartily into any scheme for its circulation. What interest can you have in it, unless you feel

that it has done you good; or why should you be anxious that others should have it, if it has not made you "wise unto salvation?" But if it has given you saving knowledge; if it has taught you your guilt and danger, and induced you to seek refuge in Christ, oh, will you not feel a burning desire to impart the same means of peace and safety to the ignorant and careless! Be assured, my young friends, if you have no desire to give others the Bible, it is a proof that you have not been benefited by the Divine Book yourselves. This is a test which you may easily apply. In proportion to the good you have received from the Bible, will be your desire to circulate it. If you believe it, and live under its influence, beyond all value is the good it has done you. Through faith in its truths, you pass from death unto life; you become children of God and heirs of heaven. But there are many who have no Bible; many millions who believe a lie; many millions who place their faith in that collection of fables, the Koran of Mohammed. And they, too, are "by nature the children of wrath." Their souls are immortal and their condition is perilous, and thousands of them are every day passing into the invisible world. Can you refuse them the Bible, that it may do for them

what it has done for you? No; your heart bleeds for their woful state, and you contribute to give them a copy of the Scriptures, and accompany your contribution by the prayer, that God would "give testimony to the word of his grace." You will find that the heathen, when they are converted, possess this benevolent spirit. The Esquimaux contribute their oils; and the islanders of the South Seas the produce of their country, to send the Bible to other regions. Let this spirit be in you. Pray cheerfully, give liberally to this best of causes. Thus you resemble God in holy kindness—and breathe a spirit of pure and lofty beneficence.

2. Feel the circulation of the Bible to be a solemn duty. You will not refuse the authority of God. The Bible was sent by other nations to you. Men brought it from other lands which enjoyed it: so that a sense of gratitude will prompt you to become benefactors in turn. The Bible has been a gift to you; be you the givers of it to others. Let no considerations prompt you to shrink from this duty. You will find it to be a great happiness to deny yourselves, that your mite may go for this hallowed purpose; that a few pence, which might have been heedlessly squandered on some petty gratification, may be given

to the purchase and distribution of the Word of God. You cannot tell what lasting good one copy of the Bible may be the means of doing. Oh, could you trace its history, as the eye of one reads it, or as the finger of another may turn its leaves,—as some pagan child begins to feel its power, or some benighted family gather round it to hear its truths and promises; could you see it carried into the “bush” for solitary study, or opened on the lonely waste by the wandering herdsman; could you mark its glorious results in fallen temples, burnt idols, rusted arms, and broken fetters, followed by just laws and kind habits, protected property and saved life, how would your heart glow with gratitude, how would all your exertions be greatly multiplied! “The seed is the Word of God.” “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand.”

And what honour, what dignity, in being the means of rescuing one poor soul from darkness! It is a work in which Christ rejoices—for it is a work like his own—a work of salvation. You become “workers together” with Christ. You engage in the best of labour, in promoting the happiness of men and the glory of God. Let me appeal to the warm emotions of your hearts. I know that I appeal not in vain to

those who feel the great blessings of early dedication unto God, whose peculiar privilege the prophet described of old, when he said of your parents—"And they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders." O, surely, sympathy for those of your own age will deeply move you. Feel that the Spirit of God has brought you into contact with the young of many lands. Stretch out your hand to the little Negro, and present him with that gospel, through which he may be "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." Open your arms to the young Indian, tell him you are his brother, and train him to read that wondrous page—whose invitation is, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Salute the wandering Arab, welcome him to your heart, and press him to accept that book, by faith in which he may, though he dwell in tents, at length come to "a city that hath foundations." Gather around you the dusky children of the Southern Ocean, and pray them to gaze on that little volume—which civilizes and saves, raises from barbarity, and elevates to peace and heaven. Be diligent and liberal in this great work, and trust in the Divine promise—"My word shall not return unto me void,"

—"It shall give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater."

3. Rejoice in what has been already accomplished. The present century has witnessed great triumphs. It has enjoyed and improved the gift of tongues. Many translations of the Scripture have been made and put into rapid and wide circulation. What hath God wrought? The labours of that noble institution, the British and Foreign Bible Society, have been greatly blessed by God. It has issued since its commencement, 19,741,770 copies of the Bible, in 140 different languages; of these 140, it has directly promoted 72 versions, and indirectly assisted 68. The number of versions put into circulation by it is 162, omitting such as are the same in reality, but printed in a different character; of these versions 110 are translations never before printed. There are, also, other societies in this country that have been highly honoured in their own sphere. The American and Foreign Bible Society has circulated five millions of Bibles. It has, among its machinery, eight steam-presses, two of them capable of printing on the same surface forty pages of the common duodecimo Bible, or ninety-six pages of the Pocket New Testament; and yet these two large presses move with such velo-

city, that 13 impressions are made in a minute, and 780 in an hour.

Bible Societies in France and Germany are no less busy in the good cause. It may be interesting for you, my young friends, to know that Bibles are distributed in France by persons called *colporteurs*, or Bible chapmen, who go from place to place selling and circulating the word of life. The British and Foreign Bible Society employs 110 of these pious and useful men, seven-eighths of whom are converted Roman Catholics. The Central Prussian Bible Society has circulated, since its commencement, a million and a half of copies of the Scriptures. The French and Foreign Bible Society circulated last year twenty-eight thousand copies. During the last thirty-two years, a million of copies has been put into circulation in Sweden. Many foreign lands, in all quarters of the globe, have also been furnished with the word of life. Much yet remains to be done even at home. Not long ago in Manchester, 10,000 Bibles were sold in three days, and children were the principal agents in the distribution.

In connexion with the Bible, I can scarcely omit to mention the issues of the London Tract Society, the publications of which, both large and small, are so

admirably calculated to convey sound religious instruction. Its grants in 1846 were above 2,000,000, its issues 17,000,000, and that in a great variety of shapes, sizes, and languages. Ought we not, my young friends, to bless God that we were born in such an age as this, when such multiplied means are at work to "give light to them that sit in darkness?"

Will not your prayer ever be, God speed such means? The triumph is coming. The glory is drawing near.

" There is a fount about to stream,
 There is a light about to beam ;
 There is a warmth about to glow,
 There is a flower about to blow ;
 There is a midnight darkness changing,
 Into gray ;
 Men of thought, and men of action,
 Clear the way.

Aid the dawning, tongue and pen,
 Aid it, hopes of pious men ;
 Aid it paper, aid it type,
 Aid it, for the hour is ripe ;
 Our earnest vigour must not slacken
 Into play ;
 Youth of prayer, and youth of action,
 Lead the way."

Let us, my young friends, engage in the labour that

we may share in the triumph. "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." The press is used in the service of Satan. It is one of his powerful auxiliaries. There are six newspapers in London wholly vicious and debasing, having a yearly circulation of about eleven millions, an amount exceeding by two-thirds the issues of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Trinitarian Bible Society, the Coldstream Bible Press,* the grants of the Tract Society, and the Sunday School Union. The Tract Society's issues for fairs and races amounted a year ago to 64,455; but the issues of a weekly paper devoted to the advocacy of such nuisances are about a million yearly. O, how much need to pray still more fervently, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord!"

And does it not rejoice you to see all good men banding together to promote this object? What cause of jealousy or separation should there be in a work which has such claims on all the churches? Unity is

* It ought to be recorded, to the honour of the Rev. Dr Thomson of Coldstream, that he has been a great benefactor to the church and world, to families and Sabbath Schools, by reducing to so large an extent the price of Bibles. Through his exertions, the monopoly of printing the Bible was abolished in Scotland, and his own press at Coldstream has been multiplying Bibles with marvellous rapidity. Children, you owe him a debt of gratitude!

strength. The churches are drawing near to one another in a spirit of love, and their power for Christ will be greatly increased. It was a great delight to many, at the Anniversary of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1824, to see on the platform Admiral Count Verhuel of France, sitting by the side of Admiral Lord Gambier of England—warriors renowned on the seas—but now promoting the circulation of the Book of Peace; by the influence of which swords shall be beaten into ploughshares, and the ocean be no longer the scene of bloody struggle, but the open pathway of brotherly intercourse and christian enterprise. Christ reigns, and “all things work together for good.” Even the wrath of man praises Him. The profits of the estate which the infidel historian Gibbon bought and possessed in Switzerland, belong now to a gentleman who expends a large portion of them in the propagation of the gospel. The press which Voltaire set up at Ferney to print his blasphemies, was long employed in Geneva, after his death, in printing the Holy Scriptures. The first provisional meeting for the re-formation of an auxiliary Bible Society at Edinburgh, was held in the room in which David Hume the atheist died. Christianity takes advantage of every circumstance, and

profits by every change. It verifies the riddle of Samson, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

And think not, my young friends, that your contributions are too small for such a purpose. You remember Him who commended the widow's mite. Let your hearts rejoice at the smallest prospect of doing good. Assistance, however little in such a cause, is always accepted. O think, that though all Europe were abundantly supplied with Bibles, how many millions would still be in destitution! A few years ago it was computed that not many more than twenty millions of copies of the Bible were in existence over all the world. Let it be supposed that the number is now trebled—still, if the globe contain a thousand millions of population, there are more than nine hundred millions who do not possess the sacred Scriptures. When and by whom are they to be supplied? Ah, how long time must elapse—how many generations pass away from the earth? By the love which God has shown you—by the blood which Christ has shed for you—by the peace and hope you cherish—by the joy of your homes and the blessing of your schools, I implore you, deeply, earnestly conjure you, to give and to pray, and to pray and to give, that "the word

of the Lord may have free course," and may be speedily found in every region of the globe, still, as of old, blessing through time and preparing for eternity. Then shall arise those "scenes, surpassing fable, and yet true"—when the knowledge of God shall fill every land and diffuse universal gladness.

"The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks,
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round."

But who are the great enemies of Bible circulation? Pagans or Mohamedans, think you? No. They are professed Christians—they are Papists. I do not refer you to some old story in days of comparative darkness, but to our own times. The present Pope is liberal in his politics. He has graciously allowed the streets of his kingdom to be lighted with gas, and permitted railroads to be made in his territory. But the circulation of the Bible he curses equally with his predecessors. He calls Bible Societies "insidious;" says that they "renew the craft of ancient heresies," because "they intrude on all kinds of men, even the least instructed, copies in vast numbers of the books of the sacred Scriptures, translated, against the

holiest rules of the church, into various vulgar tongues."* Such is Popery in the nineteenth century—hostile to the spread of God's Word. It appears to love the darkness. The friend of Father Sarpi truly said of the New Testament to his Popish audience—It is a sealed book. How miserable was this country under the Popish sway, and ere the Word of God translated into English had enlightened it! The Church of Rome had enthroned her Latin version by her side. There was no access for the people to the oracles of God. There brooded over them a darkness that might be felt—there lay upon them the eclipse of the shadow of death. Their souls were deluded by the erection of splendid edifices, sublime in their massiveness, and inspiring "a dim religious awe," by the form of their architecture. Instead of hearing the word, they listened to the chanting of a long service in an unknown tongue, by priests decked in gorgeous vestments, and with the accompaniment of music and incense. They saw an imposing spectacle. Alas! they received no instruction. But the English Bible created a vast and a rapid change; and now it is a version on which the sun never sets—a

* From his encyclical letter, written immediately after his coronation.

version of which, last twelve months, a million were produced—a copy every twelve seconds throughout the year.

Success in the work of Bible circulation is certain. God has promised it. You are not therefore to look merely at the difficulties and discouragements. The nations, it is true, love their gods, and are wedded to their folly. Isaiah, long ago, pictured a man who chose a tree, and made of one part of it a god, and with the other supplied his fire with fuel, and “baketh bread,”—“with one part he furnished his chimney, with the other his chapel—as if there was more divinity in the one end of the stick than in the other.”* No folly can be greater, no degradation deeper, than such idolatry—such pitiful delusion. Yet we know the power of God’s Word. It will prevail. The work is God’s. It does not become you to doubt or say, “How can these things be?” “I saw,” says Luther, “the whole majestic vault of God, with all its stars, supporting itself, without my being able to perceive the columns on which the Master rested it; yet it fell not. But some men strive to find out these invisible columns, and, as they cannot find them, lament and tremble, as if the firmament were about to fall upon

* South’s Sermons.

them." So God will carry out his own purposes. Let us use the means, and leave the result with him. The world has been promised to Messiah. The idols shall be cast away—the mosque shall resound with the praises of Immanuel—the synagogue shall be blessed with the faith and worship of a crucified Redeemer. "The whole earth shall be filled with his glory."

Time is precious,—your life is both short and uncertain. O, improve the golden opportunities of youth! Postpone not active service for Christ till you have come to mature age. You may never reach it. Man is like a bubble on the water; "some instantly sink into the deluge of their first parent—others float up and down two or three times, and suddenly disappear and give place to others; and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are restless and uneasy, and, being crushed with the great drop of a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth. So is every man."* Now is the season to engage in this best of works. Well-doing begun in youth will have been formed into a precious habit ere age come on. "If ye do these things, ye shall never fall." The morning of your life will be ruddy and joyous, its noon vigorous

* Jeremy Taylor.

and fresh, and its evening calm and peaceful, full of fragrant memories and inspired with glowing hopes.

O, that parents and teachers thus felt the solemn charge committed to them in the religious instruction of the young! Labour that you may receive the commendation which Jehovah pronounced upon Abraham—"I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." Let your instructions to the rising generation be based upon the Bible. As you teach them to read it, guide them to understand it; induce them to believe it; prompt them to remember it. Exemplify its practice before them; and engage them in its circulation. "Travail again as in birth" for them, so that each of you may claim the promise, "My Spirit that is upon thee, shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed." Let all your Bible lessons form a very pleasant exercise, a very attractive pursuit. Let them not be a task from whose tedious formality the young spirit shrinks, and whose threatened penalties keep it in uneasiness and terror.

**“ And as the bird, each fond endearment tries
To tempt her new-fledged offspring to the skies ;
Employ each art, reprove each dull delay,
Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”**

In conclusion, my dear young friends, I part from you with earnest prayer for your improvement in every Christian grace. May you possess every excellence which the Bible enjoins, and which Jesus exemplified ! May you be adorned with every mental and spiritual accomplishment ! Your advantages are many ; let your improvement be in proportion. Let your activity be equal to your privileges ; let your usefulness be as ample as your enjoyments. Outstrip your fathers in all that pious and patriotic enterprise which the age demands. The world is sighing for deliverance. Christ relies on you to advance his cause ; the church depends on you to take the place of your predecessors. And thou, O Spirit of truth and love ! bless thy youthful heritage ! Shed down upon it the refreshing dews of thy grace, that its opening buds may burst into fragrant blossoms, and produce abundant fruits. Fill with thy ennobling influence our rising youth. O guide their minds and control their hearts ! Hallow their pursuits and sanctify their intercourse ; elevate their aims and dignify their character. Inspire them with thine own ardour and power. Deepen

their knowledge. Strengthen their faith. Promote their holiness. Enshrine the image of their Lord within them. Lead them to admire and practise "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." Still, through thy watchful and fostering care, may they always be disposed to READ, UNDERSTAND, BELIEVE, REMEMBER, PRACTISE, AND CIRCULATE THE BIBLE! AMEN and AMEN.

FINIS.

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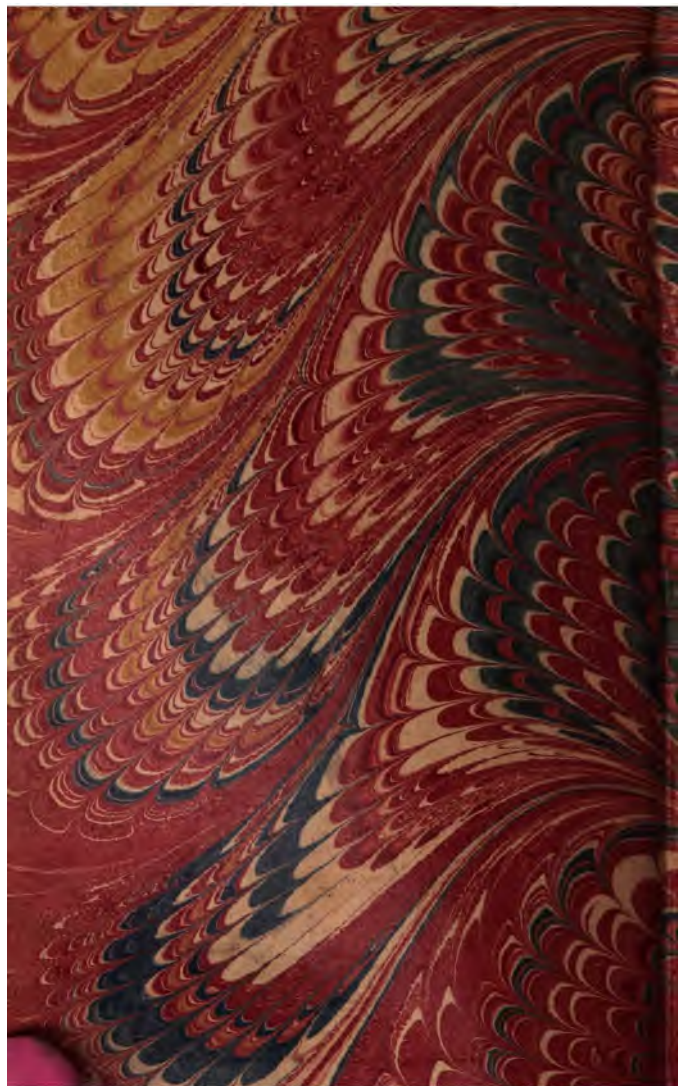
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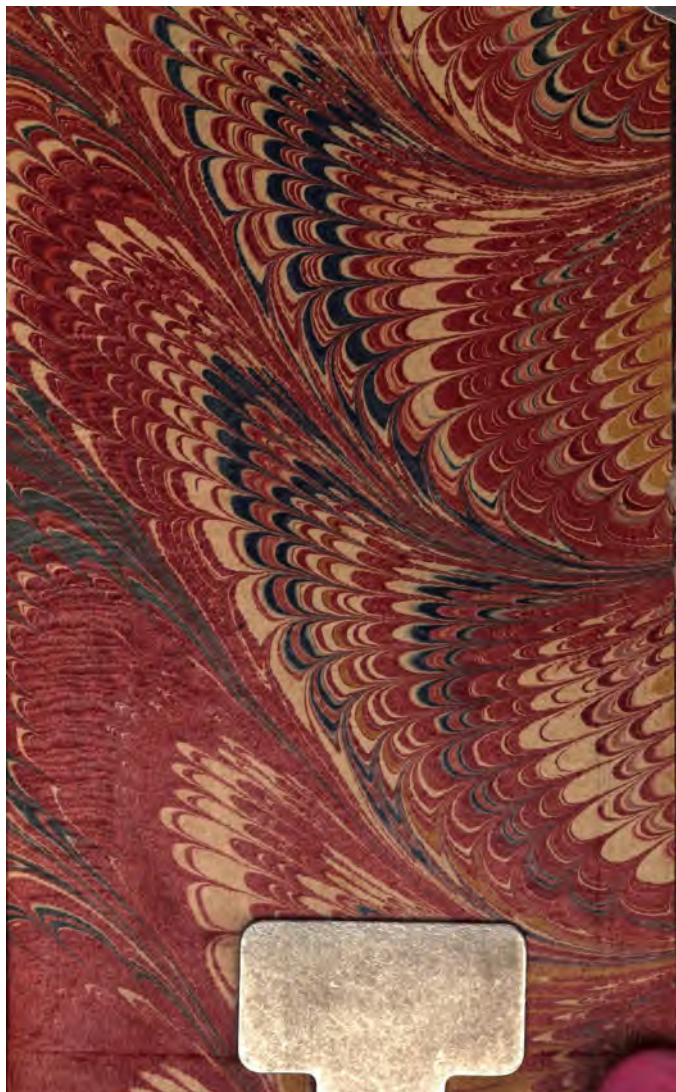
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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 13.5 million (15.5% of the population).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people, and the Government has set out a strategy for the 21st century in the White Paper on *Ageing Better* (Department of Health 1999). This paper sets out a vision for the future of health care for older people, and outlines the key areas for action.

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